

# THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1884.

## THE WHITE WITCH.

### CHAPTER IV.

TOO MANY FOR HIM.

THE new mistress of Croxham Abbey had just taken her seat in the brougham to be driven to Cheston, and her step-son was waiting to take his seat by her side, when Mr. Mayne came bustling out.

"I wonder, Laura," he said, "that you do not prefer the landau these hot afternoons, and have it open! You must find it close in this brougham."

Mrs. Mayne leaned forward to answer, a smile on her placid face. "I never care to use an open carriage, Henry, when I can have a close one. You get the dust, and you get the sun—and I am just a wee bit timid."

"And feel safer shut up, eh? Well, well, everybody to his taste. A pleasant journey to you. Get in, Godfrey."

They drove away; Mrs. Mayne talking to Godfrey. "By the by," she said, as they passed the Vicarage, "you are going out to-morrow afternoon, to Langskirk, are you not?"

"I don't know," he replied. "My father is going. Why?—do you want me to go?"—turning upon her suddenly.

"Well, to tell you the truth, little Elspeth Thornhill is coming; she has been teasing me to teach her to knit, so I told her to come in to-morrow afternoon. I thought you would be out, and that she would not be in your way. I can send her away before you come back."

"Now you are making me out to be more of a bear than I am," complained Godfrey. "I shall not go to Langskirk, and I shall make myself as agreeable as I can to both of you."

And Godfrey flattered himself that he had again rather disconcerted his step-mother. There was a short pause before she took up the conversation.

"I think those two girls are much nicer without their mother. She

seems to put a check upon them ; in her presence they catch up her old-fashioned stiffness. She ought to let them go out more."

"I think their father has more to do with that than their mother. He thinks it a bad example to the parish for the parson's daughters to go gadding about."

"Indeed! It is a pity to spoil one's daughters' prospects for one's principles."

Godfrey looked up. "Don't you think principle more important than anything else?"

"Oh, of course it is. But if all parents' principles were as strict as that, girls would never get married at all."

"Mr. Thornhill would say it was better that all four of his daughters should die old maids than that one poor girl should be induced by their example to go to a tea-party to meet her 'young man'; especially if an aged and grumpy parent required her to stay and stir up his gruel at home," concluded Godfrey, solemnly.

Mrs. Mayne laughed. "But that is such nonsense, is it not? If he is so particular, Mrs. Thornhill ought to send them away for a week now and then to people who would take them out and about. She could tell the Vicar they went to nothing but missionary meetings."

"What, would you have her deceive her husband?"

"But it is such a little thing; and it would be all for the girls' good."

+ "Now I am surprised at you. Deliberately upholding the Jesuitical doctrine that one may do acknowledged evil that possible good may come! Why, don't you know that such teaching is dangerous?" Godfrey had spoken with burlesque gravity, but he listened to her answer with keen interest.

"I am not likely to do or say anything dangerous," said she, laughing in utter good faith. "I don't think it can be very wrong to work just a little crookedly for the sake of one's children."

With the last words, her tone grew so suddenly earnest that her voice shook. And to Godfrey, on the alert, this speech seemed laden with meaning.

Cheston was soon reached. "Let me see," began Mrs. Mayne: "You have some books to change at Smith's, and I have to telegraph to 'Swan and Edgar's.'"

"Can't I do that for you?"

"Thank you, no; it is not at all worth while. It is only"—seeing Godfrey look at her—"about a new mantle that was to have come yesterday."

"Nay, the mantle was not to come till to-morrow," returned Godfrey, who had an excellent memory for unimportant trifles which did not concern him.

"Yesterday," persisted she.

Godfrey said no more. He dutifully escorted her to the door of the telegraph-office, where she dismissed him. Then he went to the bookstall, bought a paper, gave a list of the books he wanted and said

+ a doctrine no Jesuit ever taught!

he would return for them, and when he saw his step-mother coming out of the telegraph-office he slipped into it: one of the girls there had been a Croxham school-girl. He spoke to her.

"Mrs. Mayne has just sent off a telegram, but thinks she has left out a word. Just let me see the form a minute."

"I am afraid you can't see it now, sir."

"Oh, nonsense. You are not going to be so strict with me."

The girl gave him the form and he mastered its contents at a glance.

"Thank you; it is all right, after all," said he carelessly: and he left the office to rejoin his step-mother, who was now waiting for him at the bookstall.

"Where have you been, Godfrey?"

"Looking for you in the telegraph-office. Wonder how I managed to miss you?"

He hardly felt repaid for the trouble he had taken in tracking out this little mystery; for the telegram, which had brought him into Cheston in the stuffy brougham, was addressed to Miss Dixon at Dinan, and ran thus:

"Do not start until you hear again from me."

This was interesting, in that it awoke speculation as to the reason why it was worth while to telegraph at all, but it threw no light upon Mrs. Mayne's motives for wishing to defer or avoid altogether her daughter's visit. He put out a question on this subject on their way home.

"When is Miss Dixon coming to Croxham? Have you and my father settled it yet?"

"Nothing is settled yet," she answered rather quickly. "I should not wonder at Mary's refusing to come at all."

"Can't you manage it? You know how kind my father would be to her; and a girl is nowhere so safe as with her mother. It would be for her good: though I know you think a parent ought to make any effort for her child's sake, even to doing wrong."

Mrs. Mayne started palpably. "I will try," she said. "But Mary is so dreadfully reserved, and has been used to lead so quiet a life."

"Good gracious! you couldn't have anything much quieter than the Abbey or the life in it," said he, energetically. "Tell her that she may fancy herself a nun here: that she shall have the room which is built upon the exact spot where an erring brother was bricked up in the wall five centuries ago; and that I'll find out the secret passages which are supposed to exist, leading from the Abbey right under the river and into Cheston, so that she can withdraw herself quietly and unostentatiously from our midst whenever she finds the Abbey too noisy for her nerves."

They were nearing home when Mr. Wilding's gig met them, the same young woman seated in it with him who had looked so curiously at Mrs. Mayne in the morning at the Abbey entrance gate. Godfrey

nodded. The farmer touched his hat in response and his companion smiled.

Mrs. Mayne was sitting back in her corner. "Mr. Wilding, I think," she carelessly remarked. "Who was that with him?"

"His daughter," replied Godfrey. "Jane: the eldest of them all."

"I have never seen her about with them."

"Oh, she does not live at home. She came here on a short visit a few days back, and has been laid up ever since with a sore throat. Rather bad luck for her! She has not been at home for over three years, and she leaves again in a day or two."

"Where does she live, then?"

"In Wales. She is maid to a Mrs. Carradoc. The old lady goes on the Continent for months at a time, and Jane goes with her."

"Why is she in black? The Wildings are not."

"For some near relative of her mistress."

"You seem to be on very good terms with them, Godfrey!"

"Why, of course I am. I have been running in to the farmhouse at will since I was a little chap no higher than my knee."

When Godfrey was by himself that evening, thinking over the incidents of the day, a new and disagreeable idea struck him: all these difficulties put in the way of Miss Dixon's coming might be but so many artifices of her mother to arouse his own interest, with the view of securing him as a husband for her insipid and unattractive daughter. As his own character for "turning round and going the other way" was well known, and Mrs. Mayne was avowedly capable of resorting to stratagem for a daughter's benefit, this explanation of the matter was not outside the bounds of probability.

On the following afternoon, it was the feeling that she would have preferred to see him start for the agricultural show at Langskirk with his father which prompted this perverse young man to stay at home, and to saunter into the drawing-room soon after he heard the arrival of Elspeth Thornhill, and condescend to do his best to prove to his step-mother that he was anything but unsociable when he chose. It is true that it did not require much effort to amuse little Elspeth; her timid laugh came readily enough in acknowledgment of the very feeblest effort of wit on the part of the idle young man in the chair by her side. Neither was there, perhaps, any great merit in the obliging readiness he showed to pick up her knitting-cotton when she let the ball roll along the floor, or in his insensibility to fatigue while holding the skein on his fingers for her to wind. For her simple, perhaps even silly, face was very young and fair, her soft hair looked golden where the sunlight fell on it; her blue eyes were very innocent, and her mouth, however much it might pout in the serene but not enlivening atmosphere of home, was all smiles at the attentions of the brilliant Godfrey.

When Mr. Mayne returned from Langskirk and the delighted girl was pressed to stay for dinner, Godfrey supported the further infliction

of her insipid society very well. And after dinner, although he was really fond of music, in more than the accepted sense of the term, he listened to a maddening "Mazourke de Salon" and to a brilliant March, with no outward show of irritation. Then she played, in wrong time, a Spanish Bolero, with a tinkling effect on the upper notes of the piano in imitation of castanets, which took old Mr. Mayne's fancy. And there followed a talk about Spanish dances and Spanish beauties in which the elder gentleman upheld the cause of English loveliness warmly.

"Dark-eyed fiddlesticks!" said he, cutting short an expostulation from his son. "Just because you young fellows have seen pictures of women with high combs in their hair and lace shawls round their heads and fans in their hands, called 'An Andalusian Lady,' and because you have heard a lot about 'The Rose of Castile' and 'Juanita,' you think Spanish women must be handsomer than your own countrywomen. But it is all nonsense. The beauty lies in the lace and the fan: take those away, and you have a brown-skinned, thick-lipped woman not fit to compare with one of our everyday pretty English girls."

But Godfrey, who had never been to Spain, was hot in defence of brunette loveliness, and got quite eloquent in his praises of the grace and charm of Southern women. While they were in discussion, Mrs. Mayne quietly rang the bell for her maid, and gave some directions to her. She reappeared in a few minutes with a black lace shawl and some other things. Mrs. Mayne took them; and, beckoning Elspeth to the end of the room, she proceeded to fasten the lace most becomingly round her fair head with gold-headed pins; and then placing a big, black fan in the girl's obedient hand, with one corner held coquettishly before the mouth, she led her forward and turned her blushing little face towards the gentlemen.

Elsbeth, fair as a blush-rose, smiling and shy, looked bewitching. Mr. Mayne, enraptured at this illustration of the truth of his argument, gazed at her in admiration and triumph. Godfrey stroked his fair moustache and looked at her sideways, without triumph, but with perhaps more admiration still.

Mrs. Mayne glanced at him curiously and furtively. But at that moment he did not notice her. He was thinking of something else.

Then Elspeth, a little confused by the attention she was exciting, put her hand up to her head to take out the pins; but Mr. Mayne would not let her take the lace off.

"Come for a walk in the garden, and I will gather you a rose to complete the picture," said he. "Spanish ladies are always represented with a rose in their hair." But his wife gave him a meaning look, which he understood.

"Or stay," said he, "I am getting old for a cavalier, and I am rather afraid of the damp. Godfrey shall take my place, and pluck you the handsomest rose in the garden."

Godfrey obeyed without a murmur. The young people left the room, and the elder ones sat smiling and nodding at each other.

Mr. Mayne thought he had done something very clever; and that it was especially pleasing to his wife. "If that does not overcome his objection to matrimony, I don't know what will," cried he, triumphantly.

Unfortunately for their wishes, Godfrey's momentary enthusiasm, at the transformation of the Elspeth of every day into a beauty of romance was just sufficiently damped by his father's transparent generalship as to render that evening walk free from danger to him. It was a pleasant stroll enough, though, for both of them: for Godfrey, who thought how bewitchingly pretty a girl's eyes look when the daylight is going, and when you have to bend your head to see her face clearly; for Elspeth, mad to have a real lover, like those in the novels, which she and Matilda could only read by stealth, lest they should be seen by the Vicar.

They walked up and down the paths, talking of nothing in particular, which was the sort of conversation at which Elspeth was best. They decided that the air was cool, that the grass was wet, that the roses were sweet and that she would have a red one. So Godfrey crossed the grass to the bed where the finest roses grew, gathered two and brought them to her, telling her to choose. So she chose one and he fastened it in her hair close to the lace, and resisted with a little difficulty the impulse to kiss her. Then he said he would keep the second rose in memory of—this evening.

There ensued a pause; and she, being modest and inexperienced, suggested that they should go in. And Godfrey, again resisting a temptation, said yes, they had better. So they went in, apart and self-possessed, and Mrs. Mayne's face clearly fell at sight of them.

"By Jove, I had a narrow escape, though," was Godfrey's last distinct reflection before sleeping.

There was a grand flower-show at Cheston the following day. Unluckily a discourse on "The Home Duties of Women" was to be given in a neighbouring parish on that day by a celebrated preacher; and Mrs. Thornhill, who practised her duty to husband and children much better than the celebrated preacher's wife, thought it incumbent upon her to go and hear him. Matilda and Elspeth were in despair. Of course the first day of the show was the only one on which they would appear at it; the suggestion that they should go on the second day was received by them with the scorn it deserved.

"Why, the entrance is only a shilling, and there will be nothing but nursemaids," moaned Elspeth.

"And the flowers will all be dead," said Matilda, as a happy thought, looking at her father.

He felt rather sorry for them. Flowers were his hobby; and though he had a shrewd suspicion that the sudden enthusiasm of his daughters concerning them was not an unmixed passion, he allowed himself to be talked round into mildly protesting acquiescence when he

heard that Mrs. Mayne had offered to chaperon them. He liked Mrs. Mayne, but was shrewd enough not quite to trust her. Besides, he did not much care for his daughters to appear in public without their mother; and although he had, of course, only heard an edition revised for family use of Elspeth's visit to the Abbey, he did not want Godfrey, of whose indolent, useless, though harmless habits he disapproved, to come more in contact with the two girls than was necessary.

Elspeth was in a flutter of delight. Since the excitement of the evening before, of that sweet taste of admiration when she was "dressed-up"—an incident which had not reached the Vicar's ears, of that more dangerous sensation when, in the garden, Godfrey's hands had touched her hair, and she had heard, for the first time, a young man's voice shaking a little as it addressed her, she had been restless, discontented, petulant, feverishly unable to settle to anything. Her eyes turned in the direction of the Abbey, whose red gables one could see between the trees of the Vicarage garden, a hundred times in the course of the morning.

As for Godfrey, he was naturally a prey to no such violent excitement; nevertheless, he, too, looked forward with some sort of languid interest to another meeting with the girl who had fascinated him for an hour the night before. So that when the landau, containing himself and his step-mother, drove up to the Vicarage, and the girls, in ambitious new gowns made at home and bearing too evident traces of the influence of a fashion-book, came out, radiant with excitement, he decided that Elspeth's face was certainly calculated to bear even daylight inspection.

In the tent, appropriated to the show, they all kept well together, and inspected the flowers in slow, deliberate fashion. Then the band began to play in a large marquee, and then it was that Mrs. Mayne committed an act which justified the Vicar's objections to her chaperonage.

In the marquee they met some cousins of the Thornhills, and Mrs. Mayne encouraged Matilda to join their party for a time; then she took a seat to listen to the music, and told Godfrey and Elspeth to walk about and look at what they liked, and they would find her in the same spot on their return. No sooner had they availed themselves of this permission than Mrs. Mayne, glancing around, saw the eyes of that same young woman in black gazing at her under cover of some intervening foliage.

Jane Wilding was seated by her cousin, Mrs. Caird. Caird, the florist, was one of the largest of the exhibitors, and could command the entrance of his wife and a friend or two to the show. Suddenly, Mrs. Caird also espied Mrs. Mayne.

"Look, Jane," she said, "yonder is the new lady at the Abbey. See! the one in the white bonnet and veil. Mr. Mayne met her somewhere abroad and married her off-hand, it's said. She was a Mrs. Dixon. But I expect you have heard all about it at home."

"What did you say her name was?" returned Jane Wilding quickly. "Dixon!"

"Yes. Mrs. Dixon. Why? Did you ever know her when you were abroad?"

"No," carelessly replied Jane. "I never knew any Mrs. Dixon."

She turned the conversation to something else: and the band struck up again.

When Godfrey and his companion came back to the place where they had left Mrs. Mayne, she was nowhere to be seen. They looked for her, in the crowd and out of it. Elspeth was anxious; Godfrey took it coolly.

"She is sure to come back here soon," said he. "Let us sit down and listen to the music."

They sat down, and at first the time passed not unpleasantly. But when Mrs. Mayne did not return, poor Elspeth began to get nervous and uneasy as she saw the people she knew look at her, surprised, as she fancied, to see her so long with no companion but Godfrey. She was very young and very innocent, unused to the world, and her parents were very strict. So she did the most unwise thing she could do, by insisting that they should go into the grounds and look for Mrs. Mayne. Godfrey entered a protest; but the tears were evidently so near to her pretty blue eyes that he gave way, and they started upon what he felt was a wild-goose chase.

The consequence was that they did not meet Mrs. Mayne and Matilda until nearly an hour after the time at which they had promised to be back at home.

"I can't think how it happened, dear child. I only went outside for a few minutes with Mrs. Mansfield, and then we walked about listening to the music. I thought you must have joined your cousins, and gave up looking for you. Never mind: we will make haste home, now: you won't be very late, after all."

But when, after taking the girls home, Mrs. Mayne drove to the Abbey with Godfrey, she broke into a grievance against the Vicar's wife:

"She makes quite an absurd fuss about trifles! You saw what a fever of anxiety she was in because they were late. If the girls are silly enough to tell her about our missing each other, Elspeth will get as severe a lecture as if she had done something wicked."

"I hope Elspeth will tell, though," said Godfrey, drily. "Women should be straightforward. If I had the misfortune to marry a girl who was perpetually telling me small stories, I really think I should beat her."

"She would tell you big ones after that," said Mrs. Mayne, placidly.

And if he had had any intention of confounding her by this speech, Godfrey must have felt that he had signally failed.

At dinner, Mr. Mayne, who had not cared to go to the flower-show, asked them full particulars. Mrs. Mayne praised the beauty

of the girls they had met there; Godfrey disparaged it. They looked both beautiful and good, she said. Upon which, Godfrey made a remark that displeased his father.

"Godfrey, remember what you are saying. You are talking as if beauty were more important than goodness!"

"Well, is it not so?" returned he, glancing at his step-mother. "But as you are both beautiful and good, Mrs. Mayne, the matter cannot affect you, whichever way we settle it. I suppose you are both privately thinking of my choosing one of these young ladies. Of course I must put her beauty foremost. If I were a poor clerk, or a linendraper's assistant, it would be different; I would then fix my well-regulated affections on the plain but thrifty eldest daughter of ten, as the most important thing would be that my wife should be a thrifty housekeeper. As it is, the chief point is that she should please me; I can afford to dispense with the moral and useful virtues, on condition that she makes it up in charm."

His father took this speech as an unkind joke at his step-mother's expense. "Godfrey is only laughing at you," said he.

"Laughing, am I," murmured Godfrey, but without excitement, as he withdrew. "It will be no laughing matter if Madame ma belle-mère disposes of me against my will."

He fell to thinking of Elspeth, the simple little companion he had taken care of that day, with pleasure though without enthusiasm. He had enjoyed the bright happiness in Elspeth's fair face at first, he had been touched by her simple-minded distress later. But her naïve coquetry had no piquancy, her ill-humour even less, and her liking for himself was not strong enough to prove by itself an attraction.

Whether Matilda herself had come off so safely is open to question. To judge by the tears she shed in her room that night one might have thought her peace of mind was gone for ever. But whether all this emotion was because the day's pleasure was over, and to-morrow the dull routine of practising and wrangling with one's sisters must go on again, or because the Vicar had said that the girls must not go out again with the Abbey people, it would have been hard to decide. The story of the day's adventures had now been told; it angered Mr. Thornhill; it angered his wife and upset her calculations. For when she had allowed herself to dream the desirable dream of having a daughter safely settled as prospective mistress of the Abbey, it was Matilda, not Elspeth. Matilda, with her energetic temper and sarcastic tongue, would be the very wife to rule the Abbey's indolent heir. And now, with that blind indifference to the fitness of things and their own best interests which young men always showed, he appeared to be turning his thoughts to Elspeth.

Mrs. Thornhill, with a mother's marrying eye, had observed certain signs in this young man's conduct which led her to doubt whether

he had any serious thoughts yet on the all-important subject of religion. The Abbey pew and the Vicarage pew faced each other close to the chancel in Croxham church; and, against her will, Mrs. Thornhill could not help noticing an indifference as to whether his prayer-book was right side up or upside down, a tendency to kneel with his hands reverently clasped, but with his head laid upon them in such a manner that he could scrutinise the vagaries of the school-children, with an aspect of negligence towards the parson, as if he didn't know what was going on and didn't care. These defects, and a certain irreverent way of looking about him as if the communion-rails were no more than park palings, and his fellow-worshippers merely people to be stared at, a mother could not ignore; especially when things seemed to be going the contrary way instead of the straight one.

But if the young man was not exceptionally good, he was not exceptionally wicked. It is true he was given to slouch about with his shoulders lifted, and to read French novels, and to smoke a great deal more than was proper; but in character and habits he was bright and clear as the day.

Mrs. Thornhill made her way to Elspeth's little room that night, intending to question her: Godfrey was attractive; there was no doubt of that. She was not very successful; for when she had soothed the girl into drying her tears and had felt her way to the question whether she cared about Mr. Godfrey Mayne, all that the simple little creature could say in answer was: "I don't know." On the whole, Mrs. Thornhill decided that the impression made upon the easily-reached heart was not yet dangerously strong, and she resolved that it should have no chance, if she could prevent it, of getting stronger.

But there was a woman's will more stubborn than hers at work against her.

The next day at luncheon, which Godfrey and his step-mother were taking alone, she said she had called at the Vicarage, and found the girls were under punishment for the affair of yesterday.

"Put upon bread and water?" remarked Godfrey, lightly.

"Mr. Thornhill and his wife are both very angry with them."

"Nonsense!"

"Well, they are so. With Elspeth especially. Both the girls are ordered not to—well, I really believe not to speak to you again. Of course you will not care a straw about that. Poor little Elspeth had cried till her eyes were red—and it truly was no fault of hers."

"What a shame!" commented Godfrey.

From one of the windows of the Abbey drawing-room there was an uninterrupted view across a wide hay-field of the enclosure attached to the Vicarage garden where the girls played lawn-tennis. Sitting at her busy pretence of needlework after luncheon, Mrs. Mayne saw Godfrey get over the low iron railing which divided the Abbey garden

from the hay-field, saunter leisurely in that direction and join the group of figures there. She had risen from her seat and watched him from behind the blind, her fingers tapping nervously on the window-sill, until he disappeared.

When Godfrey approached the enclosure where Matilda, Elspeth, Annette and Arthur were playing lawn-tennis, the first impulse of at least two of the party had evidently been flight. But Matilda preserved a show of decency by telling them to go on playing, and, with a rather strained smile, went to the railing to speak to him. Elspeth slowly followed and shook hands with an uncomfortable blush. The unabashed Godfrey accepted readily the half-invitation Matilda felt bound to make, vaulted over the railing, and talked to the girls. Presently a maid came from the house calling to Matilda that her mamma wanted her, and Godfrey was left tête-à-tête with Elspeth. The two young ones, with an inspiration that they would find it more amusing to watch Elspeth and Mr. Godfrey from behind trees than to stay and share in the conversation, ran off at once.

The talk suddenly flagged. Even if a man is not deeply attached to a girl, the feeling that, although by no fault of his own, she has been in trouble on his account, can scarcely fail to rouse a passing interest in his mind. And when he can see the traces of that trouble in fair cheeks a little paler, blue eyes a little heavier, the interest may spring up for the moment into something very keen indeed.

"I am afraid you got over-tired yesterday. You look pale," said he, after a short pause.

The colour flushed into her face. She hoped he did not guess that she had been crying about him.

"Yes, I was rather tired," said she, smiling nervously, without looking pleased.

"It was not my fault, you know," he said, trying to look into her eyes, which she kept down. "I kept wanting you to sit down and rest, did I not? But you would walk about ——"

"Don't talk about it, please," said she, looking up at last, her lips quivering. "You don't know how angry papa was because we were so late, and—and because we enjoyed ourselves so much. He says we go out too often, and we must not think so much about enjoying ourselves, and that we are never to go out without mamma again."

"But he doesn't mean that. Next month we are going to see a polo match at Keighley, and he will let you go to it with us."

"Oh, no, I am sure he will not: you don't know what he said. He will never let us go out with Mrs. Mayne again; he said so. He said that you and she ——"

"Well, what did he say about her and me?"

"I mean ——"

"Well? Something unkind, I suppose."

"Not exactly unkind, but ——"

"And did you say it too?"

"Oh, no."

"But you said something else that was unkind about me?"

"No, no, no; indeed I didn't!"

"Nothing unkind at all? You did not say, for instance, that I was a bore, and that you were thankful never to have to listen any more to my dull and tedious talk?"

Elspeth looked full at him, her eyes and mouth round with astonishment. A tinge of pink colour had come back to her cheeks; under her garden hat her face looked lovely.

"Oh, no, I never thought of such a thing! Who has been telling you such stories?"

"It does not matter; if you are quite sure they are stories."

"Yes, they are indeed. How can you think I should be so ungrateful, when you were so kind, and I enjoyed myself so much!"

"Did you enjoy yourself, then?"

"Oh, yes, until I got frightened. More than I ever enjoyed myself in my life, I think."

"I am very glad of that. I—I enjoyed myself too," in a lower voice.

"But you always can when you like. Your amusements don't depend, as mine do, on whether papa can find a sermon and a text to fit each other, as Matilda says. Your pleasure depends on yourself." She was twisting her foot about in the grass impatiently. The little show of petulance became her.

Godfrey laid his hand on the railing, close to hers. He wanted the pretty blue eyes to look up and meet his again.

"No, it doesn't. My pleasure depends on——"

"On what?" She did look up, bright-eyed, innocent, wholly happy again, charmed and fluttered by the turn the talk had taken.

"On—on you."

His hand had closed on hers and he had kissed her, just as Mrs. Thornhill came up to them from the house. She looked aghast for a moment, then her face cleared as she glanced at happy, blushing Elspeth, and she gave Godfrey her hand cordially.

"Mr. Godfrey, this has made me very happy."

"I was coming in presently to—to see the Vicar."

What did a lie more or less matter now? He was in for it, and the less he said about the unforeseen nature of the blow which had fallen on him the better. For he repented the act as soon as he had committed it.

"She and my step-mother have been too many for me," thought poor Godfrey. "Anyway, Elspeth is not to blame, and she shan't suffer. I must do the suffering."

The interview with Mr. Thornhill was satisfactory. He said they were both very young, and matrimony was not a thing to be rushed into. This sentiment had the ardent wooer's cordial approbation. The Vicar added that he did not expect every man to be as deliber-

ate as himself, seeing that he was nearly forty before he took the plunge; and although Godfrey felt that he could have borne a similar delay as a Christian should, he made a becoming display of impatience at the idea.

He then left the Vicar's presence, and after tea in the drawing-room with the ladies of the family, enjoyed a duly authorised tête-à-tête with Elspeth under the trees in the garden, which not even the numbing effect of the parental sanction could deprive entirely of its charm. They had a picturesque parting, and Godfrey kissed her pretty and blushing face with momentary fervour.

Mrs. Mayne was alone in the drawing-room. "Where have you been, Godfrey?" she asked. "Your father has been wanting you."

"I have been to the Vicarage."

"The Vicarage! After what I told you! I wonder you had the courage. Did you see the Vicar?"

"Yes, I saw the Vicar."

"And what did he say?"

"He said: 'Bless you my children!'"

"Godfrey! What do you mean?"

"That I am going to have him for a new papa, and Mrs. Thornhill for a new mamma. And I think"—looking at her steadfastly—"that you can guess who has been the happy instrument in bringing about all this."

"You are going to marry Elspeth?—Matilda? Which is it?"

"Well, I think you may guess that also.—Is my father in the library? I will go to him."

No sooner had he left the room than Mrs. Mayne hastened up stairs to her own. There, with a smiling face, she wrote out a short telegram to be despatched to Dinan.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE THUNDER-STORM.

MR. MAYNE was delighted to hear of the engagement to Elspeth. It was not, perhaps, quite the best match his son could have made; but the Thornhills were of very good family, and Godfrey could afford to dispense with fortune in his wife; and Elspeth herself was a charmingly pretty and innocent little girl; and Mrs. Mayne had contrived to so greatly imbue him with the idea that Godfrey ought to marry somebody that he could but be pleased.

"But I know you brought it about, Laura," said he, admiringly. "You must confess that. And now where are we to look for a husband for Mary?" added he, ingenuously letting out the open secret that he had had designs on her for his son.

"You will waste your time in trying," replied his wife, gently. "Mary does not care for admiration or attention; and I really believe she means, what all girls are fond of saying, that she will never

marry. She likes to talk to men who are grave and old and serious, and I think she considers men of her own age rather frivolous and uninteresting."

"I ought to have had an answer from her before this," said Mr. Mayne. "I got a curious letter from the clergyman this morning, you know, saying that Miss Dixon's plans were still undecided. But that is nonsense; if I don't hear in a day or two from her to say she is coming, I shall go and fetch her myself."

"Mary will be sure to write in a day or two," said Mrs. Mayne.

And she proved a true prophet. Two or three days afterwards Mr. Mayne did receive a letter from his step-daughter, thanking him for the kindness of his offer, and saying that in obedience to his wishes, she would start for England as soon as she possibly could, but she had some trifling matters to arrange first.

Godfrey found that being engaged suited him very well; it gave him all the light occupation he wanted: a new place to be idle in, an object for a stroll of just the right length, and a pretty girl to talk to. Happily Elspeth was too inexperienced and too unexact to demand much ardour from her lover. Matilda indeed tried to sting her sister into a show of jealousy and an outburst of spirit: but then, Matilda was jealous, Elspeth thought.

"You should make him do something to show he is in love with you," said the elder sister, who had come to brush her hair in Elspeth's room one night, in order to stir her up to a little coquetry. "He treats you as if he were a sultan who had thrown the handkerchief to some poor little slave. You should get him to walk to Cheston in the hot sun to do some errand for you, or you should forbid him to smoke when he is in the garden with you."

"What nonsense, Matilda! As if you, who have never been engaged at all, could know better how to treat him than I do! If I were to ask him to go to Cheston he certainly would not go until the sun had gone down; he would say it was ridiculous to ask him. And if I were to tell him not to smoke out of doors, he would stay at home and smoke there."

"Well, if I were you I should let him."

"And lose him altogether! You talk as if we two girls were great beauties, Matilda; or very rich. Now that I have got one lover, I shall not be so silly as to try to send him away."

"What will you do if he goes away of his own accord?"

"He won't go, if I let him do what he likes."

"Oh, won't he! You have not any knowledge of the world."

"No, of course I haven't. Nor have you."

"I know that a man gets tired of a girl if she is the same to him always. She should try him a little now and then."

"I dare say! Well, I was cross yesterday, when he spilt the coffee down my dress, and then he talked to you and wouldn't speak to me, and I made up my mind not to be petulant again. If Godfrey

had wanted somebody to say cross things, he would have chosen you ; but he didn't, you see."

"Well, don't let us quarrel, Elspeth. I did not want to tease you really."

A few days later came the day fixed on for the annual school-treat. The Vicar's daughters pretended to consider it a great bore, although in truth they enjoyed the little excitement as much as the youngest of the school-children.

There were long tables and forms from the school-house placed under the trees in the field, between the Abbey and the Vicarage, from which the hay had just been carted away. Here the children assembled to enjoy the delicious amusement of running races for halfpence on a sultry July day ; and when they had had enough of that invigorating exercise, the real business of the entertainment began : tea. Trays full of currant bread were brought forth, buns, piles of bread-and-butter ; self-sacrificing ladies presided at the tea-trays. This part of the day's work, being by far the most interesting to the untutored minds of the children, was dragged out over an amazingly long period, considering the rapid rate at which both tea and buns, and currant bread disappeared. That over, the teachers and grown-up people sat down to eat and drink in a more civilised manner at the tables, and the children were again chivied into undesired activity by the well-meaning organisers of races and games.

Elspeth was one of the feeblest of the organisers, therefore one of the most popular. Godfrey contented himself with supplying the halfpence.

"This tiresome little boy won't run !" exclaimed she piteously, giving a fat child of about seven a gentle push to incite him to healthful exercise. "I've started him in half a dozen races, but he always comes back after a few steps. What is your name ? Why don't you run, little boy ?"

"Perhaps he can't," suggested Godfrey, as they both stooped to examine this remarkable child. "I don't think I could if I had eaten as much as he has. Can't you think of some amusement for them more—more intellectual, and less—less muscular, until they have a little got over the effects of the light refreshment ?"

"Oh, how silly you are, Godfrey," exclaimed Elspeth, laughing at his real or pretended ignorance. "There isn't anything they can do but run. Intellectual amusement ! Why, don't you know that in the schools they are obliged to teach them just like parrots ? We always do this at the treats. When they are tired of running we make them eat, and when they are tired of eating—that is, when there isn't any more left—we make them run again. That is the only way to amuse school-children.—Is that thunder ?" she asked suddenly, with a start.

"Yes, it is," answered Godfrey. "I thought we should have a storm, and here it comes."

The gathering clouds grew darker rapidly. Faint lightning flashes were followed by distant peals of thunder, and the first few drops of rain fell. The storm was upon them, almost without warning. Some of the children were being led towards the school-house, which was some distance off. The rest were huddled together under the thick branches of the elms, and among them stood Elspeth, with Godfrey by her side.

"Elspeth, Elspeth, you must come home," called her mother, espying the reluctant girl. "You will get wet through. Come at once. Make haste."

"I will come round to the Vicarage this evening if I don't find you about here," said Godfrey.

She ran off. The Thornhill party had not got home before the rain came down in a blinding sheet of water. Godfrey was still standing idly with his back against the tree, when a bright glare of lightning, followed quickly by a loud thunder-crash, startled the poor children round him and made the little girls scream. This tree was at a very short distance from the Abbey. Godfrey looked at the little ones.

"Here, children; follow me to the Abbey: quick, or you'll be drenched," said he. And snatching up a small howling thing of three or four, who thought he was the thunder and thumped him for his trouble, he made for the house through the pouring rain.

He burst open the front door, hustled the children in, and set down his small burden with a remonstrance for her ingratitude. Then he shouted for Hawkins; but that gentleman, being timid, always locked himself up in the cellar during the storm, and therefore did not appear. The maids had shut themselves in the servants' hall and were busy with the cook, who was in hysterics. Godfrey looked at his flock, wondering what he should do with them. There were eight or ten of them, boys and girls. Then he led the way to the breakfast-room, opened the door, and told them to go in. They obeyed, but they had scarcely got inside when, just as he was going to shut the door upon them, there came another vivid flash of lightning, and the children, howling and screaming with all their might, rushed out and surrounded him, and clung to him in inarticulate terror. He wished he had not been so impulsively benevolent.

"What the deuce is the matter with the little idiots?" he muttered. "Go back again, you silly children, there is nothing to be afraid of."

"There's a witch in there!" they screamed, sobbing in terrified alarm. "She is all in white. Oh, sir, save us from her! It is a white witch!"

Godfrey, somewhat puzzled at this, opened the door again, and went in himself. As he entered, a double flash lit up the room; and standing before him in the blue and blinding glare was a slight figure with a ghastly face and large weird dark eyes, dressed all in white.

With the sick, faint feeling that a shock of surprise in the midst of excitement sometimes gives, Godfrey turned back suddenly, without

knowing what he did. He hardly knew what it was he saw. She looked as much like a ghostly witch as anything. But some soft gentle words from her arrested him.

"I beg your pardon. I am Mary Dixon."

He held out his hand with some confused apology. Her touch gave him another shock; it was quite cold on his hot fingers. She seemed frightened herself. Godfrey rang the bell, consigned the terrified children to a servant, and stayed talking with Miss Dixon about her journey, her arrival and the storm, until his step-mother re-entered the room. He had had time to notice that the white dress, which had made the slight, pale, delicate stranger look so ghastly in the blue lightning-glare, was only a dressing-gown of Mrs. Mayne's, put on because her daughter's travelling-dress had got wet. He was utterly ashamed of the fright her first appearance had given him, but when he got to his room to dress for dinner he found that his hands were shaking, that his face was still white and wet.

"Confound the girl!" said he. "She has made a fool of me. Seems rather bad luck, though, for her arrival here to have been inaugurated by this awful thunder-storm!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

DURING the first week of Miss Dixon's stay at the Abbey, Godfrey did not find her improve on acquaintance. She was distant with him, unsocial, in manner almost repellant. Purposely so, he thought. At the week's end, something happened which turned the balance in his mind entirely against her.

She occupied the chamber which, in the old days when there were children about the Abbey, had been given to the governess. Godfrey thought a more appropriate room for the grave, well-informed, silent young lady could not have been found; but he soon changed his opinion. This room opened by one door into the corridor, but by another into the old school-room; which Godfrey used as his smoking-room. Mr. Mayne, finding that his step-daughter liked solitude, as became a person of her studious habits, suggested that the school-room should be given up to her as a sitting-room. His wife rather ostensibly pointed out that Godfrey used it; but Mr. Mayne said Godfrey could have the old refectory downstairs to smoke in. And so it was decided. This would remove Godfrey altogether from that part of the upper floor; he would now have no special business there; his own chamber being at the very opposite end of the long corridor. But, despite Mrs. Mayne's ostensible protest, Godfrey had a suspicion that it was she who had suggested it to his father—and he did not like it.

"Smoke in the refectory!" he grumbled mentally. "He should not smoke in the refectory; a large, bare, desolate, draughty place

where any sort of comfort was impossible. The school-room was just the place that suited him; it was small, cosy and cheerful; it had been his den for years; and he could watch from its window what was going on in the Wildings' farmyard. And now he must give it up, without any sort of acknowledgment, to a person he didn't like; in fact to a person he disliked; a prim, dull, cold, uninteresting girl who did her best to make him forget that she had even the merit of being young! Even her own mother, warm-hearted, affectionate as she was, did not seem to care very much about her. And who was to know when her visit would end?" Godfrey began to feel that Miss Dixon weighed upon his spirits.

"She can't even play!" thought he, as a final grievance. Though he grumbled at the playing of every girl he knew, and was always first in the common outcry against the piano as an instrument of torture, yet he was so fond of music that a woman who made no pretence to this ordinary accomplishment had hardly, he considered, a claim to any of the privileges of her sex. One of those privileges, his own society and conversation, he therefore considered himself entitled to withhold, as far as bare civility allowed—perhaps even farther—from Miss Dixon.

On Miss Dixon's part, as Godfrey took no pains to amuse or conciliate her, but rather returned her coldness with interest, she set him down as a dull, ill-tempered young man, who knew nothing of good manners and ought to be taught them.

But the prejudice against her was not confined to Godfrey. The story of the fright her appearance had given to the school-children, with many distortions and exaggerations, had spread like wild-fire. The name they had given to the young lady in their terror clung to her, and raised a barrier against her in the ignorant and superstitious minds of the village people. This grew stronger when it became known that fever had broken out in a low-lying district of the parish on the very day of her arrival. The feeling was so strong that her assistance both in the Sunday-school and in the district-visiting had to be declined upon whatever excuses came first. Mr. Thornhill, remonstrate with his silly flock as he would, could make no impression; the villagers would not have the young lady at the Abbey—the White Witch—to visit their cottages or teach their children.

Whether Miss Dixon guessed at the existence of this unreasonable dislike of her, it was impossible to tell. The occupations of active benevolence being denied to her, she gave herself up to such pleasures as belong to solitude. She read a good deal, delighting Mr. Mayne by the pleasure she took in the long-neglected volumes in his library, a sacred place which Godfrey had always taken pains to keep out of. She took long walks by herself, returning with her hands full of bits of moss, stones and twigs overgrown with lichen, flowering grasses, and a hundred other treasures of the woods and lanes.

The girl had indeed sore need of such pleasures as did not depend

on human caprice, for old Mr. Mayne remained her only friend. The reasons why she did not become a favourite with her equals in Croxham and the neighbourhood were more difficult to discover: it may have lain in her reserve. Had her face but possessed a little healthy bloom, it would have been lovely, but the death-like paleness was always there. Her eyes were large and brown and luminous, and the very long and dark lashes that shaded them made them look black, especially by candle-light. Her voice was low and sweet.

She presented a contrast to Mrs. Mayne. The people who had so quickly warmed to her, fair, plump and smiling, had been ready to welcome heartily a younger and fairer bearer of the same attractions; but this slight, wan daughter with grave face, and quiet, repressed manners disappointed them, and she had to pay the penalty.

There was a difference of opinion, too, between the ladies and the gentlemen about her, for which she had to suffer. The latter declared her to be beautiful. Two other charms which she undoubtedly possessed were rare among the girls of that part of the world: she had a most graceful walk and she dressed well. When Miss Dixon first arrived she was without her luggage, which had been lost on the journey; for a fortnight she was dependent upon her travelling-dress and her mother's wardrobe. But when her lost trunks appeared on a certain Saturday, and she came down the following morning dressed for church in white cashmere, artistically embroidered with wild roses and ivy, Mr. Mayne was electrified. Even Godfrey's admiration was taken by storm.

But her dress did not please the ladies at church. One and all discovered that she was over-dressed, that such a costume might be all very well in Bond Street, but in the country it was absurd. She looked like an actress, said one lady, whose daughters all wore light dresses and black cloth jackets, muslin ties, and white straw hats trimmed with black velvet. Elspeth's litany was a long wail for deliverance from rivals in Parisian toilettes, and to her the sermon was on the same heading. It seemed to her excited fancy that Godfrey's attention did not wander from his own pew so much as usual, and he certainly was maddeningly careful in coming out that his companion's pretty gown should not get caught in the door. He joined his fiancée at the church-door, as in duty bound.

"Do you like that dress?" asked Elspeth of him in the church-yard.

"That white one?" asked Godfrey, with proper indifference. "Yes, I think it very pretty. Don't you?"

"I think it would be pretty at a garden-party. It is too much for every day."

"I don't think a woman's dress can be too pretty for every day," said Godfrey, with more warmth than he had meant to put into his tone. It was a subject which interested him. "As long as it is not inappropriate to her occupations, her dress cannot be too beautiful."

"Then you must like Miss Dixon more than me," broke out Elspeth unreasonably.

"My dear Elspeth, that has nothing to do with it."

"Well, you must admire her dresses more than mine," amended she, querulously.

That was unquestionable, but he saw that it would not do to admit it. He instantly professed to admire her frocks, made by the Swiss maid from patterns in the fashion journal, and covered with curious vagaries in ill-matched trimming, contrasting with the costly simplicity of that other one. He went back to luncheon with a new interest; he was less churlish than he had been since her arrival. He begged her to take strawberries; he offered to get her a book that was mentioned, which she said she should like to read. Miss Dixon did not care for strawberries; she had too much on her hands to begin a new book just yet. Godfrey did not allow the possibility of her wishing to snub him, even with such advantages as her charming appearance gave her.

He admitted that in that get-up she looked charming, wondered he had not noticed before how delicate her features were, and knew that a little colour in her cheeks would make her lovely.

After luncheon he had followed the ladies into the drawing-room. It was the first time since Miss Dixon's arrival that he had done so. As he threw himself into a chair and picked up a book without the least intention of reading it, and with a side glance at Mary to see what she was going to do, he caught a look on his step-mother's face which arrested his attention, though he did not let her see it.

He had seen Mrs. Mayne's blue eyes, unusually so placid, travel stealthily from her daughter to him wide with an anxiety he could not understand.

What on earth was she afraid of? After turning this question over in his mind, with his eyes on his book, he could only come to the one conclusion, that she feared, with a mother's natural partiality, that her daughter's attractions, to which he had been so blind until to-day, might disturb the course of his affection for little Elspeth. If this were so, her disinterestedness did his step-mother great credit. For would it not have been to the interest of herself and her daughter to secure himself as a son-in-law, and have no more care for the girl's future any more than for her own? Godfrey Mayne presented advantages. It was not every young man who was heir to such a place as Croxham Abbey. There was something in all this that he could not penetrate.

"It is very hot in this room," he observed. "If you will trust to me, Miss Dixon, I will undertake to find you a seat where you shall even have a breeze."

"If you can manufacture that, I will go with pleasure," said she.

Godfrey noted, he thought, dismay on the mother's face as they both left her presence. The refectory was a large, high room at

the back of the house, furnished meagrely with odds and ends that were not wanted anywhere else, carpeted with matting, and having a mouldy, unused smell. However, it was cool enough. Godfrey drew an American chair to one of the windows, which he threw open. A trailing branch of Virginia creeper, which had been crushed against the panes, fell inside on to the window-sill.

"Now, if you sit there, you can enjoy the breeze and the ants at the same time."

"What a lovely room! Doesn't anybody use it?" asked she, as she placed herself in the long low chair in an easy attitude that Godfrey admired as he answered her.

"It is scarcely ever used," he answered, not choosing to say that he now came to it sometimes in consequence of being turned out of the other. "It used to be our play-room."

Miss Dixon went on. "It is difficult to find anything to say about the Abbey but 'How nice!' 'How lovely!' I think you must be tired of hearing it admired."

"I should have thought you must have seen too many beautiful places, too many châteaux in France, and palaces in Rome and Venice, to think much of this old homestead."

A shadow crossed her face, so quickly that he could not describe it; and when she answered, the momentary vivacity with which she had last spoken had gone out of her voice.

"I have seen a great many beautiful places, as you say. But just as they have charms of their own, so has an English country-house qualities which none of the foreign palaces possess."

"By Jove, it has!" assented Godfrey, with sudden heartiness. "I beg your pardon, Miss Dixon. I hope you will forgive my warmth, but, there, I can so entirely agree with you. If you want to wean yourself from the world by learning to hate your very existence, if you want to meditate a battle or a murder, if you want to go melancholy mad on a windy night or suspend yourself from a silken rope on a wet Sunday—there is no place like an English country-house. And in all the advantages I have described, the Abbey, I pledge you my word, yields to none."

Mary Dixon laughed, showing her pretty teeth. "Then why do you stay here?"

"Upon my word I hardly know why I do. Want of energy to go elsewhere."

It seemed to Godfrey that another shadow, of a different kind, appeared for an instant on the pale face as he said these words; almost, this time, as if the large brown eyes had dared for a second to flash forth an expression of contempt. Surely he must have been mistaken. This little, white, timid girl would never dare to take such a liberty with him. He continued:

"I expect you will soon find the charms of Croxham pall. No woman can exist here."

"But surely I have seen some women about?" said she, smiling.

"Oh, you don't count them, surely?" rejoined he, with a quiver about the corners of his mouth as he saw that she understood him. "They, whom you saw to-day, can manage to drag on a poor existence here, because they don't know of any of those things which make a woman's life worth having. Look at their dress, for instance. Did you see one wearer to-day with even elementary notions on the subject? They don't understand what dress means, or the enormous difference it makes not only to the wearers but to the beholders."

"Yes," said Miss Dixon, gently, but with a gleam in her soft dark eyes as they steadily met his. "Not only can a well-chosen gown change a girl from an insignificant thing, not worth the trouble of looking at, into a rational creature; but it can also change a boor into a gentleman."

And as the tea-bell rang at that moment, she sprang up with more energy, but not with less grace, than he had yet seen in her, and was at the door before he had time to open it for her.

Surely she must know, thought Godfrey—as he followed her without sign of stooping, so much was his dignity hurt—that she had offended him by that speech! As he walked after the little white figure, with its erect dark head and a certain haughtiness of carriage which he had not noticed before, along the hall towards the drawing-room, it seemed to him that not only did she know she had offended him, but that she absolutely had the effrontery not to care.

Well, she would soon find out the extent of the mistake she had made; she would discover what madness it was, in one of those English country-houses she was so enthusiastic about, to offend the only man about the place on whom she could depend for escort and companionship. A boor, was he? Then a boor he would remain as far as she was concerned. So, having during tea done his best to mark his displeasure by devoting himself exclusively to Mrs. Mayne, he left the room without another look at the white cashmere: and when dinner-time came, he still maintained towards the young lady the frigidity which, as he had not at the time the wit to see, was much more flattering than indifference.

He felt, in spite of himself, rather interested to know whether her pretty toilette that day had been a happy accident, such as a chance visit to Paris might even bring about in the costume of one of the ladies of the neighbourhood whom he so much despised.

The first glance at her next morning, when he came down as usual when breakfast was nearly over, satisfied him on that point. The grey linen trimmed with coarse lace, and relieved at the throat by one tiny sprig of scarlet geranium, was as perfect in its way as the white cashmere of the day before. It was difficult to be indifferent to the wearer of such a gown, Godfrey felt; but principle must be maintained: at any rate, the first advances towards reconciliation must come from the offender.

But the offender gave no sign. For two days they scarcely spoke to each other ; and although Godfrey even went out of his way to give her opportunities of saying a few words of gracious commonplace in a conciliatory manner—for he had relented so far as to be ready to accept this as amends—she let them slip in a way which admitted but of one explanation : she did not want to make amends.

And then it was that Godfrey began to put to himself this question : What was the meaning of the strange inconsistency between Miss Dixon's ease of movement and Miss Dixon's stiffness of manner ? How was it that a woman whose every motion was full of the freedom grafted by culture on natural grace, a woman who had mastered the difficult art of dressing perfectly, who, although she spoke little, spoke like one familiar with society as well as with books—should yet, in the not very alarming presence of her mother and of two harmless country gentlemen, appear reserved, timid, reticent and depressed, with a timidity and reserve usually associated only with the shy, half-fledged school-girl ?

Was it the very dulness and loneliness of the Abbey which frightened her into low spirits ? And why was she so fond of solitude ? Was it caused by the prejudice against her which still reigned strongly in the village, the unpleasant nickname of "White Witch" that had been given her ? Did she even know it ?

When Godfrey put some of these questions to his step-mother, with an air of languid indifference as to the answer she would make, which re-assured her as to the slightness of the interest he took in the subject, she laughed rather nervously, said that Mary had always been shy, that she had never cared much for society, and that she was quite happy. And she finished by saying that all that the girl cared for in the world was books.

But even without glancing at those plump white hands whose nervous twitching in moments of anxiety or perplexity he began to understand so well, Godfrey knew that all these statements were false. Miss Dixon was not "shy ;" there was not a trace of awkwardness or self-consciousness in the habitual timidity which she had suddenly broken through to tell him his conduct was boorish. If she did not care for society, she had too much of the repose which it gives, under all her reserve, not to have been a good deal in it. Mary Dixon was not unhappy, whatever her mother might think, or pretend to think : and, finally, if she had in truth cared for nothing but books, she would not have dressed so well.

The little mystery that hung about her, which caused his step-mother to tell so many small falsehoods, which had previously led her to try so hard to prevent her daughter's coming, irritated him, Godfrey, to such an extent that he began to feel life was not worth having until he had found it out. That it was not anything very serious he felt sure. Dear, simple-minded, placid Mrs. Mayne was so clumsy a conspirator, with her bungling over the letter-bag, her tell-tale nervous-

ness and her transparent stories, that Godfrey concluded she could not have anything very dreadful to hide. His interest was soon quickened by the fact that a few weeks of country air and country walks had so good an effect upon the young lady's looks, that he began to feel his neglect of her was not only discourteous, but wrong.

Now that the bloom of health had returned to her cheeks, she was very beautiful. It took effect upon the golden youth of the neighbourhood; and Godfrey, engaged man though he was, was enraged at having missed the opportunity of securing the intimacy of a brother with her, as he felt that he might have done, had she not so grossly tricked him at the outset into thinking her insipid and uninteresting. Now it was too late; though her reserve and timidity remained, she showed through it all a marked intention of keeping him in that back-ground place which he had at first chosen to fill.

The conviction began to grow in force upon him that there must be something wrong about her; and, his attention being now fully alive, he discovered something in the relations between mother and daughter to puzzle him afresh. It was this: although it was clear that Miss Dixon's health and spirits had rapidly improved, and also that the meeting with strangers, either callers at the Abbey or people she visited with her mother, seemed to make her brighter instead of overwhelming her with shyness, as Mrs. Mayne asserted, yet the latter seemed anxious for her to keep to the secluded solitary life she had led on her first arrival, and insisted that if she went out much, her health would soon give way altogether.

"But, my dear Laura," said Mr. Mayne one day, when his wife objected to her daughter being included in a party they were making up to go to see a polo match, "it would not be more fatiguing than the little dance she went to the other night, and she has been looking better ever since. I believe she is a vain little peacock, after all, and likes being considered the prettiest girl in the room and to know that they all want to dance with her. I am sure she would like to go. Why, her eyes glisten at the thought! Wouldn't you like it, Mary?"

She gave a glance at her mother, and said she was afraid she must give it up. The long day in the hot sun might be too much for her.

On the afternoon of the match, however, when the waggonette had come round, and Mary was peeping out of the library with a book in her hand, but with a wistful look on her face, Mr. Mayne, who was waiting for his wife at the foot of the stairs, beckoned to her stealthily, and gently pushed her in the direction of the staircase.

"There, my dear, run upstairs and put your hat on as fast as you can. You are longing to go, and go you shall."

"But mamma—you know we decided I had better not go!"

"Never mind; I say you are to go. It won't do you any harm; it's all nonsense; you're not made of gingerbread. Now go at once, there's a good girl, or I shall be very much hurt and offended."

"But the waggonette will be overcrowded!"

Mr. Mayne stamped his foot. He hated opposition and was getting impatient. She looked at his kind old face once more and decided. In an instant she had flown upstairs, and before her mother had reached the hall-door the blushing, guilty girl was by her side, glad to hide her confusion by drawing on her gloves, while Mr. Mayne exultingly told his wife of his change of plan. She said very little, as usual, but was evidently much annoyed. They were going to take the three eldest Thornhill girls, and with the extra person the waggonette would be inconveniently crowded. Godfrey was vexed too; he hardly knew why. For one thing, Mary Dixon's hurried toilet would completely cut out Elspeth's. Mr. Mayne, on the seat in front, beside Barth, the coachman, was cloudlessly happy at his ill-advised success, and turned round to rally them on being so silent a party. His victim, Mary, felt very uncomfortable, and when they arrived at the ground gently scolded her step-father on the first opportunity.

"My coming has spoilt everything and made them all cross," whispered she, piteously.

"Never mind, my dear. Not at all. It is all right."

In a few minutes Mr. Mayne, who had been going about, returned to Mary and said Mrs. Underwood wanted to see her. A sudden new light of anxiety flashed in Mrs. Mayne's eyes at the name, but she had not time to make any objection: they were already away.

Mrs. Underwood, of Croxham Grange, was the still handsome wife of the jolliest old officer who ever thought the crowning glory of a soldier's life was the mess-table. He and she had both taken a fancy to little Miss Dixon, and the only one of their children who remained at home, Ernest, a young fellow close upon twenty-one, had dutifully followed suit. He had come to the ground in his dog-cart. When he caught sight of his favourite partner of a few nights ago sitting in the carriage with his mother, he jumped down before the groom could catch the reins, and rushed up to it.

"Miss Dixon, I'm so glad to see you! I thought you did not care for polo and were not coming."

"I—Mr. Mayne would have me come."

"Why, young girls ought not to want much insistence to enjoy themselves," said Colonel Underwood. "And you don't look as if you did, Miss Dixon. We have all heard a great deal of your studious habits, but it is my belief you are a fraud, and only study when you can't get anything better to do."

The colour rushed into her cheeks at this, and Mrs. Underwood told him not to tease her. All the officers of the regiment stationed at Cheston knew the Underwoods, who were very popular; and they came crowding round the carriage. When Godfrey made his way to it, he found Miss Dixon looking her best and brightest, chattering away with a gaiety she never showed at the Abbey, or, as it suddenly

occurred to him, in her mother's presence. She seemed quite to ignore him; and he went back to the waggonette and his duty, feeling vaguely dissatisfied with himself and everybody else.

Late in the afternoon he was sent to tell her that they were ready to return home.

"Thank you, Mr. Godfrey," said she, "but the waggonette was so dreadfully crowded in coming, owing to my unfortunate presence—you know you said so yourself—that I think I shall accept the very kind offer I have just had from ——"

"You will not be cramped up this time," he interrupted. "My father goes back inside, Barth will be sent home, and you shall sit in front with me." Godfrey spoke coldly: he was pulling his moustache and looking disagreeable enough to make the prospect of a tête-à-tête with him anything but inviting. "If you fancied you heard me regret your coming, you misunderstood me; I was only sorry for the inconvenience you suffered."

"Miss Dixon, I beg your pardon, let me speak to you for a minute," broke in Ernest eagerly from the other side.

Godfrey, with some great defects, had abundant small ones: one was a sharp sense of hearing for anything people wished to keep from him. In the lad's excited whisper he plainly heard the words "sulky brute: drives awfully badly."

The last reproach was unfortunately true, in so far as that Godfrey was a careless driver. Miss Dixon turned to him with a far sweeter smile than she had ever before given him, and said that she had accepted a seat in the dog-cart—to relieve the waggonette—with Mrs. Underwood's approval.

Godfrey hardly had the decency to wait till the end of her sentence before he raised his hat and went off, without another word, boiling and seething with rage. And the fast pace at which he rattled his party home was remarkable.

A cigar in the garden, where he lounged about on his return, glancing from time to time at the road, failed to restore him to good temper. At last the dog-cart came in sight, rolling merrily along, its two occupants in front laughing, and evidently on the best of terms. When it stopped he was out of sight. But he saw Ernest drive off, looking very well satisfied with himself.

"Conceited ape!" thought Godfrey, as he threw his cigar away. He strolled towards the window of the drawing-room, without any object; as he drew near he heard the voice of Miss Dixon, speaking to her mother.

"And he is only a boy; younger by a year or two than myself, and I must talk to somebody. I cannot always live shut up like a nun."

"Be quiet, Mary," broke in her mother imperiously, but yet with an undisguised dread in her tones. "You have no heart; you are a stone; your hardness frightens me. You can enjoy yourself, and flirt and dance, as if we were not in danger, pursued by ——"

"Hush, mamma—for Heaven's sake!" broke in the young girl in a voice of terror.

Mrs. Mayne began to sob. Godfrey did not scruple to listen: the window was open and the words came out quite distinctly. He could not get away, there was that much to be said for him, without being heard and seen. He was standing in the flower-bed close under the wall, by the side of the window.

"I tell you it is as much to your advantage as to mine that I should forget a little—if I can," Mary continued, almost in a whisper. "If I go on living within myself I shall go mad, and then ——" She stopped, with what sounded plainly like a fearful significance.

"Don't talk like that, child, or you will kill me," sobbed Mrs. Mayne. "I do not wish to be hard to you; but yet—if you would only show a little heart!"

"Take care, mamma, that you don't show too much. I am not so hard as you think; only, as I tell you, I must forget now and then: unless you wish me to die!" she ended passionately.

"I ought not to have let you come here; it but increases the risk. But Mr. Mayne was so resolute—and would have fetched you himself—and—I did not know what to do for the safest. I thought, you see, Mary, that in coming here myself I was coming to a place of shelter; but somehow I am beginning to fear it may not prove so. If——"

"Hush, mamma, it will be all right," repeated the girl, hastily. "You may trust me, you *must* trust me, for I am young and I cannot live always like a statue; now I have grown stronger, all my old spirits come back in spite of myself, and of what you know. And if you see me enjoying myself sometimes in lightness, I do pray you to leave me alone; I tell you again that you may trust me."

"And I tell you, Mary, that it would be safer for us both if you put on your reserve of manner, and kept quiet within doors, instead of gadding about in public."

"I want more amusement sometimes than I can get indoors," responded the girl, a wring of reproach in her words. "You and Mr. Mayne are devoted to yourselves; and that ill-mannered bear of a son of his does not please me. It is selfish of me to want it, I dare say; but each of us must bear the burden in our own way. Don't cry, mamma; don't cry! I do not want to cross your will; but I must take some little good out of life while I can. Heaven knows it may not be for long."

Through all the reckless passion of her last words, her voice remained low, so that a portion of them Godfrey did not catch. But he had heard quite enough.

The dressing-bell was ringing, and they both quitted the room, leaving him planted there, against the outer wall.

*(To be continued.)*

## ROGER BEVERE.

## THE BELL-AND-CLAPPER.

ROGER BEVERE'S arm proved obstinate. Swollen and inflamed as I had never seen any arm yet, it induced fever, and he had to take to his bed. Scott, who had his wits about him in most ways, had not spoken a minute too soon, or been mistaken as to the probable danger; while Mr. Pitt told Roger every time he came to dress it, beginning with the first evening, that he deserved all he got for being so fool-hardy as to neglect it: as a medical man in embryo, he ought to have foreseen the hazard.

It seemed to me that Roger was just as ill as he was at Gibraltar Terrace, when they sent for his mother: if not worse. Most days I got down to Paradise Place to snatch a look at him. It was not far, taking the underground railway from Miss Deveen's.

I made the best report I could to Lady Bevere, telling nothing—except that the arm was giving a little trouble. If she got to learn the truth about certain things, she would think the letters deceitful. But what else could I do?—I wished with all my heart somebody else had to write them. As Scott had said to me about the flitting from Mrs. Long's (the reason for which or necessity of it, I was not enlightened upon yet), I could not betray Bevere. Pitt assured me that if any unmanageable complications arose with the arm, both Lady Bevere and Mr. Brandon should be at once telegraphed for. A fine complication it would be, of another sort, if they did come! How about Miss Lizzie?

Of all the free-and-easy young women I had ever met with, that same Lizzie was the freest and easiest. Many a time have I wondered Bevere did not order her out of the room when she said audacious things to him or to me—not to say out of the house. He did nothing of the kind; he lay passive as a bird that has had its wings clipt, all spirit gone out of him, and groaning with bodily pain. Why on earth did he allow her to make his house her abode, disturbing it with her noise and her clatter? Why on earth—to go on further—did he rent a house at all, small or large? Nobody else lived in it, that I saw, except a little maid, in her early teens, to do the work. Later I found I was mistaken: they were only lodgers: an old landlady, lame and quiet, was in the kitchens.

"Looks fearfully bad, don't he!" whispered Lizzie to me on one occasion when he lay asleep, and she came bursting into the room for her bonnet and shawl.

"Yes. Don't you think you could be rather more quiet?"

"As quiet as a lamb if you like," laughed Lizzie, and crept out on tiptoe. She was always good-humoured.

One afternoon when I went in, Lizzie had a visitor in the parlour. Miss Panken! The two, evidently on terms of close friendship, were laughing and joking frantically; Lizzie's head with its clouds of red-gold hair, was drawn close to the other head and the mass of black braids adorning it. Miss Panken sat sipping a cup of tea; Lizzie a tumbler of hot water that gave forth a suspicious odour.

"I've got a headache, Mr. Johnny," said she: and I marvelled that she did not, in her impudence, leave the "Mr." out. "Hot gin-and-water is the very best remedy you can take for it."

Shrieks of laughter from both the girls followed me up stairs to Roger's bedside: Miss Panken was relating some joke about her companion, Mabel. Roger said his arm was a trifle better. It always felt so when Pitt had been to it.

"Who is it that's down stairs now?" he asked, fretfully, as the bursts of merriment sounded through the floor. "Sit down, Johnny."

"It's a girl from the Bell-and-Clapper refreshment room. Miss Panken they call her."

Roger frowned. "I have told Lizzie over and over again that I'd not have those girls encouraged here. What can possess her to do it?" And, after saying that, he passed into one of those fits of restlessness that used to attack him at Gibraltar Terrace.

"Look here, Roger," I said, presently, "couldn't you—pull up a bit? Couldn't you put all this nonsense away?"

"Which nonsense?" he retorted.

"What would Mr. Brandon say if he knew it?—I'll not speak of your mother. It is not nice, you know; it is not indeed."

"Can't you speak out?" he returned, with intense irritation. "Put what away?"

"Lizzie."

I spoke the name under my breath, not liking to say it, though I had wanted to for some time. All the anger seemed to go out of Roger. He lay still as death.

"*Can't* you, Roger?"

"Too late, Johnny," came back the answer in a whisper of pain.

"Why?"

"She is my wife."

I leaped from my chair in a sort of terror. "No, no, Roger, don't say that! don't say it for the love of heaven! It cannot be."

"But it *is*," he groaned. "These eighteen months past."

I stood dazed; all my senses in a whirl. Roger kept silence, his face turned to the pillow. And the laughter from below came surging up.

I had no heart affection that I was aware of, but I had to press my hand to still its thumping as I leaned over Roger.

"Really married? Surely married?"

"As fast and sure as the registrar could marry us," came the smothered answer. "We did not go to church."

"Oh, Roger! *How* came you to do it?"

"Because I was a fool."

I sat down again, right back in the chair. Things that had puzzled me before were clearing themselves now. *This* was the torment that had worried his mind and prolonged, if not induced, the fever, when he first lay ill of the accident; this was the miserable secret that had gone well-nigh to disturb the brain: partly for the incubus the marriage entailed upon him, partly lest it should be found out. It had caused him to invent fables in more ways than one. Not only had he to conceal his proper address from us all when at Gibraltar Terrace, especially from his mother and Mr. Brandon; but he had had to scheme with Scott to keep his wife in ignorance altogether—of his accident and of where he was lying, lest Lizzie should present herself at his bedside. To account for his absence from home, Scott had improvised a story to her of Roger's having been despatched by the hospital authorities to watch a case of illness at a little distance; and Lizzie unsuspectingly supplied Scott with changes of raiment and other things Roger needed from his chest of drawers.

This did for a time. But about the period of Roger's quitting Gibraltar Terrace, Lizzie unfortunately caught up an inkling that she was being deceived. Miss Panken's general acquaintance was numerous, and one day one of them chanced to go into the bar-room of the Bell-and-Clapper, and to mention, incidentally, that Roger Bevere had been run over by a hansom cab, and was lying disabled in some remote doctor's quarters—for that's what Scott told his fellow students. Madam Lizzie rose in rebellion, accused Scott of being no gentleman, and insisted upon her right to be enlightened. So, to stop her from making her appearance at St. Bartholomew's with inconvenient enquiries, and possibly still more inconvenient revelations, Roger had promptly to quit the new lodgings at Mrs. Long's, and return to the old home near the Bell-and-Clapper. But I did not learn these particulars at first.

"Who knows it, Roger?" I asked, breaking the silence.

"Not one of them but Scott," he answered, supposing I alluded to the hospital. "I see Pitt has his doubts."

"But they know—some of them—that Lizzie is here!"

"Well? So did you, but you did not suspect further. They think of course that—well, there's no help for what they think. When a fellow is in such a position as mine, he has to put up with things as they come. I can't quite ruin myself, Johnny; or let the authorities know what an idiot I've been. Lizzie's aunt knows it; and that's enough at present; and so do those girls at the Bell-and-Clapper—worse luck!"

It was impossible to talk much of it then, at that first disclosure ; I wished Roger good afternoon, and went away in a fever-dream.

My wildest surmises had not pictured this dismal climax. No, never ; for all that Mistress Lizzie's left hand displayed a plain gold ring of remarkable thickness. "She would have it thick," Roger said to me later. Poor Roger ! poor Roger !

I felt it like a blow—like a blow. No good would ever come of it—to either of them. Worse than no good to him. It was not so much the unsuitableness of the girl's condition to his ; it was the girl herself. She would bring him no credit, no comfort as long as she lived : what happiness could he ever find with her ? I had grown to like Roger, with all his faults and failings, and it almost seemed to me, in my sorrow for him, as if my own life were blighted.

It might not have been quite so bad—not *quite*—had Lizzie been a different girl. Modest, yielding, gentle, like that little Mabel I had seen, for instance, learning to adapt her manners to the pattern of her husband's ; had she been that, why in time, perhaps, things might have smoothed down for him. But Lizzie ! with her free and loud manners, her off-hand ways, her random speech, her vulgar laughs ! Well, well !

How was it possible she had been able to bring her fascinations to bear upon him—he with his refinement ? One can but sit down in amazement and ask how, in the name of common-sense, such incongruities happen in the world. She must have tamed down what was objectionable in her to sugar and sweetness while setting her cap at Bevere ; while he—he must have been blind, physically and mentally. But no sooner was the marriage over than he awoke to see what he had done for himself. Since then his time had been principally spent in setting-up contrivances to keep the truth from becoming known. Mr. Brandon had talked of his skeleton in the closet : he had not dreamt of such a skeleton as this.

"Must have gone in largely for strong waters in those days, and been in a chronic state of imbecility, I should say," observed Pitt, making his comments to me confidentially.

For I had spoken to him of the marriage, finding he knew as much as I did. "I shall never be able to understand it," I said.

"*That's* easy enough. When Circe and a goose sit down to play ness, no need to speculate which will win the game."

"You speak lightly of it, Mr. Pitt."

"Not particularly. Where's the use of speaking gravely now the deed's done ? It is a pity for Bevere ; but he is only one young man amid many such who in some way or another spoil their lives at its threshold. Johnny Ludlow, when I look about me and see the snares spread abroad in this great metropolis by night and by day, and at the crowds of inexperienced lads—they are not much better—who have to run to and fro continually, I marvel that the number of those who lose themselves is not increased ten-fold."

He had changed his tone to one solemn enough for a judge.

"I cannot *think* how he came to do it," I argued. "Or how such a one as Bevere, well-intentioned, well brought up, could have allowed himself to fall into what Mr. Brandon calls loose habits. How came he to take to drinking ways, even in a small degree?"

"The railway refreshment bars did that for him, I take it," answered Pitt. "He lived up here from the first, by the Bell-and-Clapper, and I suppose found the underground train more convenient than the omnibus. Up he'd rush in a morning to catch—say—the half-past eight train, and would often miss it by half a minute. A miss is as good as a mile. Instead of cooling his heels on the draughty and deserted platform, he would turn into the refreshment room and find there warmth and sociable company in the shape of pretty girls to chat with: and, if he so minded, a glass of something or other to keep out the cold on a wintry morning."

"As if Bevere would!—at that early hour!"

"Some of them do," affirmed Pitt. "Anyway, that's how Bevere fell into the habit of frequenting the bar-room of the Bell-and-Clapper. It lay so handy, you see; right in his path. He would run into it again of an evening when he returned: he had no home, no friends waiting for him, only lodgings. There ——"

"I thought Bevere used to board with a family," I interrupted.

"So he did at first; and very nice people they were: Mr. Brandon took care he should be well placed. That's why Bevere came up this way at all: it was rather far from the hospital, but Mr. Brandon knew the people. In a short time, however, the lady died, the home was broken up, and Bevere then took lodgings on his own account; and so—there was nobody to help him keep out of mischief.—To go on with what I was saying. He learnt to frequent the bar-room at the Bell-and-Clapper: not only to run into it in a morning, but also on his return in the evening. He had no sociable tea or dinner-table waiting for him, you see, with pleasant faces round it. All the pleasant faces he met were those behind the counter; and there he would stay, talking, laughing, chaffing with the girls, one of whom was Miss Lizzie, goodness knows how long—the places are kept open till midnight."

"It had its attractions for him, I suppose—what with the girls and the bottles."

Pitt nodded. "It has for many a one besides him, Johnny. Roger had to call for drink; possibly without the slightest natural inclination for anything, he had perforce to call for it; he could hardly linger there unless he did. By-and-by, I reckon, he got to like the drink; he acquired the taste for it, you see, and habit soon becomes second nature; one glass became two glasses, two glasses three. This went on for a time. The next act in the young man's drama was, that he allowed himself to glide into an entangle-

ment of some sort with one of the said girls, Miss Lizzie Field, and was drawn-in to marry her."

"How have you learnt these particulars?"

"Partly from Scott. They are true. Scott has a married brother living up this way, and is often running up here; indeed at one time he lived with him, and he and Bevere used to go to and fro to St. Bartholomew's in company. Yes," slowly added the doctor, "that refreshment room has been the bane of Roger Bevere."

"And not of Scott?"

"It did Scott no good; you may take a vow of that. But Scott has some plain, rough common-sense of his own, which kept him from going too far. He may make a good man yet; and a name also, for he possesses all the elements of a skilful surgeon. Bevere succumbed to the seductions of the bar-room, as other foolish young fellows, well-intentioned at heart, but weak in moral strength, have done, and will do again. Irresistible temptations they present, these places, to the young men who have to come in contact with them. If the lads had to go out of their way to seek the temptation, they might never do it; but it lies right in their path, you perceive, and they can't pass it by.—Of course I am not speaking of all young men; only of those who are deficient in moral self-control. To some, the Bell-and-Clapper bar-room presents no more attraction than the Bell-and-Clapper church by its side; or any other of such rooms, either."

"Is there not any remedy for this state of things?"

Pitt shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose not," he said. "Since I pulled up from drinking, I have been unable to see what these underground-railway rooms are needed for: why a man or woman, travelling but for half an hour, more or less, must needs be provided with places to drink in at both ends of the journey and all the middles. Biscuits and buns are there as well, you may say—serving as an excuse perhaps. But for one biscuit called for, there are fifty glasses of ale, or what not. Given the necessity for the rooms," added Pitt, with a laugh, "I should do away with the lady-servers and substitute men; which would put an end to three parts of the attraction. No chance of *that* reformation."

"Because it would do away with three parts of the custom," I said, echoing his laugh.

"Be you very sure of that, Johnny Ludlow. However, it is no business of mine to find fault with existing customs, seeing that I cannot alter them," concluded the doctor.

What he said set me thinking. Every time I passed by one of these stations, so crowded with the traffic of young city men, and saw the bottles arrayed to charm the sight, their bright colours gleaming and glistening, and looked at the serving damsels, with their bedecked heads, arrayed to charm also, I knew Pitt must be right. These rooms might bring in grist to their owners' mill; but it struck

me that I should not like, when I got old, to remember that I had owned one.

Roger Bevere's arm began to yield to treatment, but he continued very ill in himself; too ill to get up. Torment of mind and torment of body are a bad complication.

One afternoon when I was sitting with him, sundry quick knocks down stairs threatened to disturb the doze he was falling into—and Pitt had said that sleep to him just now was like gold. I crept away to stop it. In the middle of the parlour, thumping on the floor with her cotton umbrella—a huge green thing that must have been the fellow, when made, to Sairey Gamp's—stood Mrs. Dyke, a stout, good-natured, sensible woman, whom I often saw there. Her husband was a well-to-do coachman, whose first wife had been sister to Lizzie's mother, and this wife was their cousin.

"Where's Lizzie, sir?" she asked. "Out, I suppose?"

"Yes, I think so. I saw her with her bonnet on."

"The girl's out, too, I take it, or she'd have heard me," remarked Mrs. Dyke, as she took her seat on the shabby red sofa, and pushed her bonnet back from her hot and comely face. "And how are we going on up there, sir?"—pointing to the ceiling.

"Very slowly. He cannot get rid of the fever."

She lodged the elegant umbrella against the sofa's arm and turned sideways to face me. I had sat down by the window, not caring to go back and run the risk of disturbing Roger.

"Now come, sir," she said, "let us talk comfortable: you won't mind giving me your opinion, I dare say. I have looked out for an opportunity to ask it: you being what you are, sir, and his good friend. Them two—they don't hit it off well together, do they?"

Knowing she must allude to Bevere and his wife, I had no ready answer at hand. Mrs. Dyke took silence for assent.

"Ah, I see how it is. I thought I must be right; I've thought it for some time. But Lizzie only laughs in my face, when I ask her. There's no happiness between 'em; just the other thing; I told Lizzie so only yesterday. But they can't undo what they have done, and there's nothing left for them, sir, but to make the best of it."

"That's true, Mrs. Dyke. And I think Lizzie might do more towards it than she does. If she would only ——"

"Only try to get a bit into his ways and manners and not offend him with hers," put in discerning Mrs. Dyke, when I hesitated. "He is as nice a young gentleman as ever lived, and I believe has the making in him of a good husband. But Lizzie is vulgar and her ways are vulgar; and instead of checking herself and remembering that he is just the opposite, and that naturally it must offend him, she lets herself grow more so day by day. I know what's what, sir, having been used to the ways of gentry when I was a young woman, for I lived cook for some years in a good family."

"Lizzie's ways are so noisy."

"Her ways are noisy and rampagious," assented Mrs. Dyke, "more particularly when she has been at her drops; and noise puts out a sick man."

"Her drops!" I repeated, involuntarily, the word calling up a latent doubt that lay in my mind.

"When girls that have been in busy employment all day and every day, suddenly settle down to idleness, they sometimes slip into this habit or that habit, not altogether good for themselves, which they might never else have had time to think of," remarked Mrs. Dyke. "I've come in here more than once lately and seen Lizzie drinking hot spirits-and-water in the daytime: I know you must have seen the same, sir, or I'd not mention it—and beer she'll take unlimited."

Of course I had seen it.

"I think she must have learnt it at the counter; drinking never was in our family, and I never knew that it was in her father's," continued Mrs. Dyke. "But some of the young women, serving at these bars, get to like the drink through having the sight and smell of it about 'em all day long."

That was more than likely, but I did not say so, not caring to continue that branch of the subject.

"The marriage was a misfortune, Mrs. Dyke."

"For him I suppose you gentlemen consider it was," she answered. "It will be one for her if he should die: she'd have to go back to work again and she has got out o' the trick of it. Ah! she thought grand things of it at first, naturally, marrying a gentleman! But unequal marriages rarely turn out well in the long run. I knew nothing of it till it was done and over, or I should have advised her against it; my husband's place lay at a different part of London then—Eaton Square way. Better, perhaps, for Lizzie had she gone out to service in the country, like her sister."

"Did she always live in London?"

"Dear, no, sir, nor near it; she lived down in Essex with her father and mother. But she came up to London on a visit, and fell in love with the public life, through getting to know a young woman who was in it. Nothing could turn her, once her mind was set upon it; and being sharp and clever, quick at figures, she got taken on at some wine-vaults in the city. After staying there awhile and giving satisfaction, she changed to the refreshment-room at the Bell-and-Clapper. Miss Panken went there soon after, and they grew very intimate. The young girl left, who had been there before her; very pretty she was: I don't know what became of her. At some of the counters they have but one girl; at others, two."

"It is a pity girls should be at them at all—drawing on the young men! I am speaking generally, Mrs. Dyke."

"It is a pity the young men should be so soft as to be drawn on

by them—if you'll excuse my saying it, sir," she returned, quickly. "But there—what would you? Human nature's the same all the world over: Jack and Jill. The young men like to talk to the girls, and the girls like very much to talk to the young men. Of course these barmaids lay themselves out to the best advantage, in the doing of their hair and their white frills, and what not, which is human nature again, sir. Look at a young lady in a drawing-room: don't she set herself off when she is expecting the beaux to call?"

Mrs. Dyke paused for want of breath. Her tongue ran on fast, but it told of good sense.

"The barmaids are but like the young ladies, sir; and the young fellows that congregate there get to admire them, while sipping their drops at the counter; if, as I say, they are soft enough. When the girls get hold of one softer than the rest, why perhaps one of them gets over him so far as to entrap him to give her his name—just as safe as you hook and land a fish."

"And I suppose it has a different termination sometimes?"

Honest Mrs. Dyke shook her head. "We won't talk about that, sir: I can't deny that it may happen once in a way. Not often, let's hope. The young women, as a rule, are well-conducted and respectable: they mostly know how to take care of themselves."

"I should say Miss Panken does."

Mrs. Dyke's broad face shone with merriment. "Ain't she impudent? Oh yes, sir, Polly Panken can take care of herself, never fear. But it's not a good atmosphere for young girls to be in, you see, sir, these public bars; whether it may be only at a railway counter, or at one of them busy taverns in the town, or at the gay places of amusement, the manners and morals of the girls get to be a bit loose, as it were, and they can't help it."

"Or anybody else, I suppose."

"No, sir, not as things are: and it's just a wrong upon them that they should be exposed to it. They'd be safer and quieter in a respectable service, which is the state of life many of 'em were born to—though a few may be superior—and better behaved, too: manners is sure to get a bit corrupted in the public line. But the girls like their liberty; they like the free-and-easy public life and its idleness; they like the flirting and the chaffing and the nonsense that goes on; they like to be dressed up of a day as if they were so many young ladies, their hair done off in bows and curls and frizzes, and their hands in cuffs and lace-edgings; now and then you may see 'em with a ring on. That's a better life, they think, than they'd lead as servants or shop-women, or any of the other callings open to this class of young women: and perhaps it is. It's easier, at any rate. I've heard that some quite superior young people are in it, who might be, or were, governesses, and couldn't find employment, poor young ladies, through the market being so overstocked. Ah, it is a hard thing, sir, for a well brought-up young woman to find lady-like employment now-a-

days. One thing is certain," concluded Mrs. Dyke, "that we shall never have a lack of barmaids in this country until a law is passed by the legislature—which, happen, never will be passed—to forbid girls serving in these places. There'd be less foolishness going on then, and a deal less drinking."

These were Pitt's ideas over again.

A loud laugh outside, and Lizzie came running in. "Why, Aunt Dyke, are you there!—entertaining Mr. Johnny Ludlow!" she exclaimed, as she threw herself into a chair. "Well, I never. And what *do* you two think I am going to do to-morrow?"

"Now just you mind your manners, young woman," advised the aunt.

"I am minding them—don't you begin blowing-up," retorted Lizzie, her face brimming over with good humour.

"You might have your things stole; you and the girl out together," said Mrs. Dyke.

"There's nothing to steal but chairs and tables. I'm sure I'm much obliged to you both for sitting here to take care of them. You'll never guess what I am going to do," broke off Lizzie, with shrieks of laughter. "I am going to take my old place again at the Bell-and-Clapper, and serve behind the counter for the day: Mabel Falkner wants a holiday. Won't it be fun!"

"Your husband will not let you; he would not like it," I said in my haste, while Mrs. Dyke sat in open-mouthed amazement.

"And I shall put on my old black dress; I've got it yet; and be a regular barmaid again. A lovely costume, that black is!" ironically ran on Lizzie. "Neat and not gaudy, as the devil said when he painted his tail pea-green. You need not look as though you thought I had made acquaintance with him and heard him say it, Mr. Johnny; I only borrowed it from one of Bulwer's novels that I read the other day."

If I did not think that, I thought Madam Lizzie had been making acquaintance this afternoon with something else. "Drops!" as Mrs. Dyke called it.

"There I shall be to-morrow, at the old work, and you can both come and see me at it," said Lizzie. "I'll treat you more civilly, Mr. Johnny, than Polly Panken did."

"But I say that your husband will not allow you to go," I repeated to her.

"Ah, he's in bed," she laughed; "he can't get out of it to stop me."

"You are all on the wrong tack, Lizzie girl," spoke up the aunt, severely. "If you don't mind, it will land you in shoals and quicksands. How dare you think of running counter to what you know your husband's wishes would be?"

She received this with a louder laugh than ever. "He will not know anything about it, Aunt Dyke. Unless Mr. Johnny Ludlow

here should tell him. It would not make any difference to me if he did," she concluded, with candour.

And as I felt sure it would not, I held my tongue.

By degrees, as the days went on, Roger got about again, and when I left London he was back at St. Bartholomew's. Other uncanny things had happened to me during this visit of mine, but not one of them brought with it so heavy a weight as the thought of poor Roger Bevere and his blighted life.

"His health may get all right if he will give up drinking," were the last words Pitt said to me. "He has promised to do so."

#### PART II.

THE weather was cold and wintry as we began our railway journey. From two to three years have gone on, you must please note, since the time told of above. Mr. Brandon was about to spend the Christmas with his sister, Lady Bevere—who had quitted Hampshire and settled not far from Brighton—and she had sent me an invitation to accompany him.

We took the train at Evesham. It was Friday, and the shortest day in the year; St. Thomas, the twenty-first of December. Some people do not care to begin a journey on a Friday, thinking it bodes ill-luck: I might have thought the same had I foreseen what was to happen before we got home again.

London reached, we met Roger Bevere at the Brighton station, as agreed upon. He was to travel down with us. I had not seen him since the time of his illness in London, except for an hour once when I was in town upon some business for the Squire. Nothing had transpired to his friends, so far as I knew, of the fatal step he had taken; that was a secret still.

I cannot say I much liked Roger's appearance now, as he sat opposite me in the railway carriage, leaning against the arm of the comfortably-cushioned seat. His fair, pleasant face was gentle as ever, but the once clear blue eyes no longer looked very clear and did not meet ours freely; his hands shook, his fingers were restless. Mr. Brandon did not much like the signs either, to judge by the way he stared at him.

"Have you been well lately, Roger?"

"Oh yes, thank you, Uncle John."

"Well, your looks don't say much for you."

"I am rather hard-worked," said Roger. "London is not a place to grow rosy in."

"Do you like your new work?" continued Mr. Brandon. For Roger had done with St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and was out-door assistant to a surgeon in private practice, a Mr. Anderson.

"I like it better than the hospital work, Uncle John."

"Ah! A fine idea that was of yours—wanting to set-up in

practice for yourself the minute you had passed. Your mother did well to send the letter to me and ask my advice. Some of you boys—boys, and no better—fresh from your hospital studies, screw a brass-plate on your door, announcing yourselves to the world as qualified surgeons. A few of you go a step further and add M.D.”

“Many of us take our degree as physician at once, Uncle John,” said Roger. “It is becoming quite the custom.”

“Just so: the custom!” retorted Mr. Brandon, cynically. “Why didn’t *you* do it, and modestly call yourself Dr. Bevere? In my former days, young man, when some ultra grave ailment necessitated application to a physician, we went to him in all confidence, knowing that he was a man of steady years, of long-tried experience, of practical skill, whose advice was to be relied upon. Now, if you are dying and call in some Dr. So-and-so, you may find him a young fellow of three or four and twenty. As likely as not only an M.B. in reality who has arrogated to himself the title of Doctor. For I hear some of them do it.”

“But they think they have a right to be called so, Uncle John. The question——”

“What right?” sharply demanded Mr. Brandon. “What gives it them?”

“Well—courtesy, I suppose,” hesitated Roger.

“Oh,” said Mr. Brandon.

I laughed. His tone was so quaint.

“Yes, you may laugh, Johnny Ludlow—showing your thoughtlessness! There’ll soon be no modesty left in the world,” he continued; “there’ll soon be no hard, plodding work. Formerly, men were content to labour on patiently for years, to attain success, whether in fame, fortune, or for a moderate competency. Now they must take a leap into it. Tradespeople retire before middle-age, merchants make colossal fortunes in a decade, and (to leave other anomalies alone) you random young hospital students spring into practice full-fledged M.D.s.”

“The world is changing, Uncle John.”

“It is,” assented Mr. Brandon. “I’m not sure that we shall know it by-and-by.”

From Brighton terminus we had a drive of two or three miles across country to get to Prior’s Glebe—as Lady Bevere’s house was named. It was old-fashioned and commodious, and stood in a large square garden that was encircled by a thick belt of towering shrubs. Nothing was to be seen around it but a huge stretch of waste land; half a mile off, rose a little church and a few scattered cottages. “The girls must find this lively!” exclaimed Roger, taking a comprehensive look about him as we drove up in the twilight.

Lady Bevere, kind, gentle, simple-mannered as ever, received us lovingly. Mr. Brandon kissed her, and she kissed me and Roger. It was the first Christmas Roger had spent at home since rushing

into that mad act of his ; he had always invented some excuse for declining. The eldest son, Edmund, was in the navy ; the second, George, was in the Church ; Roger was the third ; and the youngest, John, had a post in a merchant's house in Calcutta. Of the four girls, only the eldest, Mary, and the youngest were at home. The little one was named Susan, but they called her Tottams. The other two were on a visit to their aunt, the late Sir Edmund Bevere's sister.

Dinner was waiting when we got in, and I could not snatch half a word with Roger while making ready for it. He and I had two little rooms opening to each other. But when we went up stairs for the night we could talk at will ; and I put my candle down on his chest of drawers.

"How are things going with you, Roger !"

"Don't talk of it," he cried, with quite a burst of emotion. "Things cannot be worse than they are."

"I fancy you have not pulled-up much, as Pitt used to call it, have you, old friend ? Your hands and your face tell tales."

"How can I pull-up ?" he retorted.

"You promised that you would."

"Ay. Promised ! When all the world's against a fellow, he may not be able to keep his promises. Perhaps may not care to."

"How is Lizzie ?" I said then, dropping my voice.

"Don't talk of her," repeated Bevere, in a tone of despair ; despair if I ever heard it. It shut me up.

"Johnny, I'm nearly done over ; sick of it all," he went on. "You don't know what I have to bear."

"Still—as regards yourself, you might pull-up," I persisted, for to give in to him, and his mood and his ways, would never do. "You might if you chose, Bevere."

"I suppose I might, if I had any hope. But there's none ; none. People tell us that as we make our bed so we must lie upon it. I made mine in an awful fashion years ago, and I must pay the penalty."

"I gather from this—forgive me, Bevere—that you and your wife don't get along together."

"Get along ! Things with her are worse than you may think for. She—she—well, *she* has not done her best to turn out well. Heaven knows I'd have tried *my* best ; the thing was done, and nothing else was left for us : but she has not let me. We are something like cat-and-dog now, and I am not living with her."

"No !"

"That is, I inhabit other lodgings. She is at the old place. I am with a medical man in Bloomsbury, you know. It was necessary for me to be near him, and six months ago I went. Lizzie acquiesced in that ; the matter was obvious. I sometimes go to see her ; staying, perhaps, from Saturday to Monday, and come away cursing myself."

"Don't. *Don't*, Bevere."

"She has taken to drink," he whispered, biting his agitated lips. "For pretty near two years now she has not been a day sober. As heaven hears me, I believe *not one day*. You may judge what I've had to bear."

"Could nothing be done?"

"I tried to do it, Johnny. I coaxed, persuaded, threatened her by turns, but she would not leave it off. For four months in the autumn of last year, I did not let a drop of anything come into the house; drinking water myself all the while—for her sake. It was of no use; she'd go out and get it: every public house in the place knows her. I'd come home from the hospital in the evening and find her raving and rushing about the rooms like a mad woman, or else lying incapable on the bed. Believe me, I tried all I could to keep her straight; and Mrs. Dyke, a good, motherly woman, you remember, did her best to help me; but she was too much for both of us, the demon of drink had laid too fast hold of her."

"Does she come bothering you at your new lodgings?"

"She doesn't know where to come," replied Bevere; "I should not dare to tell her. She thinks I am in the doctor's house, and she does not know where that is. I have told her, and her Aunt Dyke has told her, that if ever she attempts to come after me there, I shall stop her allowance. Scott—you remember Richard Scott?"

"Of course."

"Well, Scott lives now near the Bell-and-Clapper: he is with a surgeon there. Scott goes to see her for me once a week, or so, and brings me news of her. I declare to you, Johnny Ludlow, that when I first catch sight of his face I turn to a cold shiver, dreading what he may have to say. And you talk about pulling-up! With such a wife as that, one is thankful to drown care once in a way."

"I—I suppose, Roger, nothing about her has ever come out *here*?"

He started up, his face on fire. "Johnny, lad, if it came out here—to my mother—to all of them—I should die. Say no more. The case is hopeless, and I am hopeless with it."

Anyway, it seemed hopeless to talk further then, and I took up my candle. "Just one more word, Roger: Does Lizzie know you have come down here? She might follow you."

His face took a look of terror. The bare idea scared him. "I say, don't you invent impossible horrors," gasped he. "She *couldn't* come; she has never heard of the place in connection with me. She has never heard anything about my people, or where they live, or don't live, or whether I have any. Good-night."

"Good-night, Roger."

And the final ending to it all will be told next month.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

## THE CHANNEL ISLANDS.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THE CRUISE  
OF THE RESERVE SQUADRON."

**L**IKE all other islands and countries, the Channel Islands have a past history of their own and a far-reaching pedigree.

The earliest known inhabitants were the Druids, whose presence is sufficiently attested by those huge monuments and remains which, even to this day, throw a weird and solemn influence upon mind and imagination. There must have been something grand and lofty about this people, who seem to have laid the foundation for many of the principles that have governed the succeeding world. And they must have owned a power we have not, and a patience we might seek in vain. For in these days how could we raise a Stonehenge, or carry a gigantic altar to the summit of a mountain? Full of poetry and romance, too, must have been those Druids; and to the Celts of to-day has their mantle descended. Less than half a century ago, more than fifty of these remains are said to have existed in Jersey, of which the greater part have been destroyed. The one at Anne Port, however, has luckily escaped the triumph of mind over matter, the nineteenth century march of intellect and improvement.

The Romans, who planted their foot everywhere, and everywhere seem to have set their seal, though not as the Druids, took the Channel Islands in their conquering march. The very name of Jersey is said to be a corruption of *Cæsarea*, a change certainly for the better. Eshcol would sooner have suited its character, since it undoubtedly yields a rich store of grapes. Like Canaan, too, it is a land flowing with milk. The Jersey cows increase and multiply, and emigrate to all parts of the world; especially to America, where now everything that is good finds its way. Honey we did not see, but probably not because it is not there.

Tout vient à qui sait attendre: and the time of the Saxons came in the sixth century, when Jersey was called *Augia*. The Danes followed, and then the Normans. William the Conqueror stepped into England, and the islands fell under British rule. With short interregnums, they have remained a portion of the British dominions ever since.

Suns rose and set, the stars moved on their course, centuries rolled on. James I. came to the throne; ecclesiastical matters woke into activity; the first Dean of Jersey received authority from the Bishop of Winchester. In 1779 the Prince of Nassau attempted to take Jersey, and landing in St. Ouen's Bay with six thousand men, was driven back.

In 1781 an attack, made by de Rullecourt, was, on the other hand, all but successful. Probably it would have been quite so but for the bravery of Major Pierson, who, at the age of five-and-twenty, proved himself a hero worthy of his country, and had he lived would no doubt have fulfilled an illustrious career. In January, 1781, the French landed a body of 1,200 men, surprised and took the town of St. Helier; the Governor was seized in bed, made prisoner, and forced to send an order to the troops commanding them to remain in barracks.

Pierson, however, disregarding the order, rapidly assembled his troops, and marched upon the French. They met and fought in the Royal Square, and the French were overcome. De Rullecourt fell, and, so, alas, did Pierson; the latter before he could know that his bravery had saved the island. De Rullecourt was buried in St. Helier's Churchyard, Pierson within the church itself. A monument was erected to his memory; the memory of one of the truest and bravest officers ever placed at the head of British troops.

Thenceforth the Channel Islands were to be left in peace. Wars and rumours of wars were to affect them no more. They might turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and give themselves up to the quiet pleasures of cultivation. The fruits of their labours are apparent. Scarcely a foot of ground in Jersey but seems turned to some profitable account. From the summit of Prince's Tower you may see the greater portion of the island. It looks as one large, flowering, fruitful garden, dotted about with rich pastures, where the Jersey cattle luxuriate; intersected by admirably-kept roads, and hedges from beginning to end neat and well-trimmed as if they enclosed the park of a fastidious owner. And we have seen that the inhabitants appreciate their privileges, and by beautiful and poetical names endeavour to impress upon themselves and others that their little island is not merely a fertile garden but an Arcadia.

So much, in few words, for the history of the island. This record shows no reason why the Jersey of to-day should not be prosperous. As we sow we reap. It is thus with the individual, and the history of any country is after all only the history of many individuals taken collectively. The inhabitants of Jersey, energetic and industrious, reap the fruits of their labours. The chief productions of the soil are potatoes and grapes, which are exported to the amount of many thousands of pounds. Apples and pears also yield a large harvest; and the Jersey pears, especially the Charmontel, are not only delicious, they are costly.

The apple orchards abound. When we were there the trees looked overladen, and yet the ground was strewn with windfalls—effect of the disastrous gale of the second of September. In many parts of the island, too, are large vineries; and it is worth a visit to Jersey to see the rich, ripe green and purple grapes hanging in countless

clusters within the glass houses. These are also exported, and one grower alone last year made a small fortune by his grape harvest.

But, to the visitor, the principal attraction of Jersey—as of all the Channel Islands—is the rocky coast. The whole of it may be seen in a few days, though it requires weeks to be appreciated. One may quickly learn the outlines of the rocks, and take in their height, depth and grandeur, mark the curves and crescents of the bays, and the way the blue sea rolls steadily in, to break at last in a long line of white, foamy surf. But the true enjoyment of all coast scenery is to view it in all shades and weathers; at sunrise, midday, sunset; to watch the light playing on sea and land; to mark the progress of the shadows; to lie in delicious solitude and abandonment with only the



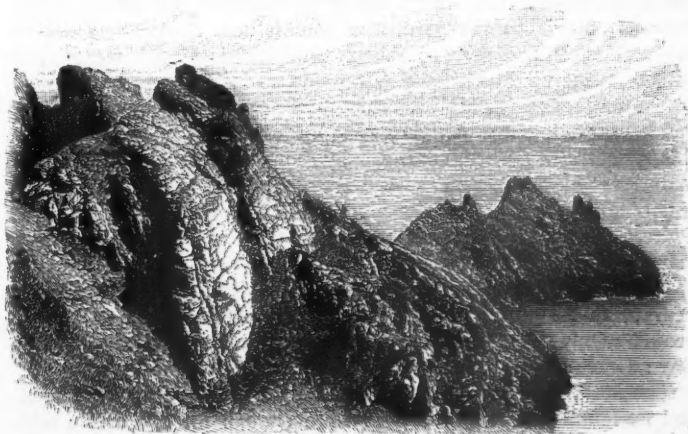
ON THE PORT, JERSEY.

clang of the seagull to disturb one's reverie; to spend day after day upon the water, cruising in and out of the irregularities of the rocks; learning them by heart and taking them into the heart; to creep round their base and so form a true conception of their size and beauty; to land on a rock above high-water mark and revel in the plash and roar of the sea as it dashes around; to find out the caves and the hollow nooks, and the places where the wild birds build and scream and clang, and hatch their young, and teach them to fly.

Fairer day never dawned than our first Monday in Jersey—anything but a Black Monday to us. The car looked quiet, respectable and well organised, and without misgiving we took our seats beside the driver. The horses dashed through the town at express speed; the air was intoxicating. Soon the streets were left behind, and we mounted a steep hill, with a valley, almost a ravine, on the

left. To the right was a large building bought by the Jesuits, originally the Imperial Hotel, in size and importance eclipsing all other hotels in Jersey.

At the top of the hill we passed St. Saviour's Church, largest but not oldest in the island. Prince's Tower was our first halting-place. Grey walls overgrown with ivy gave it a romantic look, and whatever its age, it at least seemed very ancient. It is built on rising ground, surrounded by trees and wild tangle that in Jersey ought to be appreciated. From the top, you have a view of almost the whole island. Jersey lies before you like a fair garden, green and undulating, not hilly. Every inch of ground seems cultivated or otherwise utilised. Bordering the sea-shore, one traces a white line of steam,



L'ETAC.

as the train goes to and fro on its short railway journey. Beyond, lies the shimmering water, with the rocks that rise thereout like pinnacles. Far away, right and left, are the white cliffs of France.

A very pleasant and lovely picture, bathed as it was in sunshine; whilst, over all, the blue sky threw its magic influence. But we could not linger long; nor was it necessary; and soon the car was once more bowling through green lanes, between tall hedges. On Saturday we had been below them, now we were above: commanded wayside houses and green fields; felt ourselves superior to the cabbage stalks.

Straight across to Bouley Bay; one of the prettiest, wildest, most romantic parts of the island. Here a wooded valley or ravine was almost grand, reminding one in a small way of some of the Black Forest scenery. It swept down to the sea, where a single house overlooked the calm waters in stately solitude. The cliffs were high, bold and substantial.

Next came Rozel Bay with a still lovelier view, perhaps because it was more elevated. Here we went over what was called a tropical garden : a pretty, somewhat wild and broken plantation on the side of the cliff. Though the month was October, roses bloomed, and the magnolia spread out its creamy flowers and shed forth its luscious scent. Palm trees and tall Indian grass helped the gardens to their reputation, but we saw nothing much more tropical than this.

We entered from below and climbed upwards through winding paths and over miniature bridges until we stood on gorsy heights, and overlooked a glorious view. Breezes came from over the sea, more bracing and refreshing than the sleepy hollow; blooming heather yielded to the tread. Below, warm and sheltered, was the small Rozel Inn, where we were supposed to lunch. The car was at rest in the yard, the horses had disappeared within the stables. The sea, sparkling with loveliest and most vivid colours, came up to within a few yards, and rolled over the sand with a lazy sound intensely soothing and delicious. One could only feel how reviving it would be, what an existence, to stay awhile in this quiet resting-place, come up by day with a favourite book, and lounge away the hours on these breezy heights, revelling in sunshine and blue sky, sea and cliffs, whose outlines might be traced so far. Quite close, white and glistening, looked the coast of France, not so many miles away either, as the crow flies.

It was hard to return to sea level; to lose the pure wind of heaven, that swept over the heights and "cooled one's fevered brow." Only one other part of Jersey charmed me as did Rozel Bay : Grève de Lecq, to be mentioned by-and-by.

The inn was equal to the occasion, had even a choice of luncheons; and we found a small room just large enough for two, and a table decorated with a snow-white cloth. A maiden, not all forlorn or downcast, attended to one's needs, and put down in triumph a well-furnished dish of native oysters. But Jersey, it is said, was once more famous for its oysters than it is now. The beds do not yield as they did, supply has not equalled demand. The world, some declare, is getting old and worn out. Yet this cannot apply to its population. That is ever on the increase; and presently it would almost seem that new-comers will have to stand outside the edge of the world, to make room for those within it. Perhaps a new sense will be given them—a power to tread upon air.

Rising out of the sea were groups of rocks known as the Pater-nosters, the Dirouilles, and the Ecrehous; and as this coast is one of the most picturesque portions of Jersey, so is it one of the most dangerous. But Rozel Bay is small; much smaller than that of Bouley, which has a fine sweep of its own. Fishing-boats were moored in the little harbour ready to go out with the next tide. The water was so clear and bright that quite far out one could see the bottom. Shells there were none to speak of, but fragments of rock

lay about, jasper, agate, and cornelian. As usual, we gathered a pocketful of mementoes, to be—again as usual—discarded when the collection had assumed gigantic proportions, and consigned to the tender mercies of a chamber-maid, whose sympathies with such collections are seldom strongly developed.

Presently the car was once more in readiness, and if the horses did not exactly paw the ground with thorough-bred impatience, they were at least ready for their work. The jovial conductor summoned his scattered flock with a shrill whistle, that reminded one of the signal to which London cabmen are wont to respond. But, at the last moment, a black sheep was usually found to have wandered, and delays often ensued.

Our conductor was not only amiable, but musical, and, as the novels of a past generation would have expressed it, accompanied himself beautifully on the pianoforte. Fortunately he did not trouble us with songs on the road. He sometimes carried a roll of music with him, with which, at different halting-places (pianos abounded everywhere) he entertained his audience: and if two of them failed to swell the number of his hearers and escaped to explore the bays and the cliffs, and watch the ebb and flow of that beautiful and eternal sea, he did not take it amiss, or, more probably, never remarked their absence. That was one great feature of our excursions on the car, impossible at any other time of the Jersey "season": we were practically as much to ourselves as if we had been in sole possession of the Shandaradan: might converse at will with our fellow travellers, or confine our remarks to the driver or to each other. The conductor was, however, not one of the silent men of earth, and in a monastery would probably have spent one half his life in talking, and the other half in penances for broken rules. His facetious observations drew forth many a smile, and once raised a laugh against a middle-aged spinster of the Charles Dickens type, with flat curls, a pinched face, a small waist, a basket, and a big umbrella that was always getting into the way of her neighbours, right and left. The conductor had gravely assured her that an unmistakably modern windmill we happened to be passing, had been erected by Julius Cæsar for the use of his household.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the credulous lady. "Pray, sir, to what do you attribute this wonderful preservation?"

"To the purity of the air, ma'am," replied the conductor. "People never grow old here, and buildings never decay. London, for instance, is quite different. It is well-known that Cleopatra's Needle has suffered more damage in the short time it has adorned the banks of the Thames than during all its previous existence. In the course of the next century it is expected that the whole of it will be floating through space in infinite particles."

"Dear! dear!" cried the lady once more. "I must really think about settling down here, and making Jersey my head-quarters."

"Quite time you did, ma'am," replied the conductor, who, to do him justice, appeared not to see all that his words implied. But a general laugh could not be avoided, and the irate lady strongly suspecting that a compliment had not been paid her, took her revenge, and flourished down her umbrella upon her next neighbour's toes with a vigour that brought at least one heartless laugh to an untimely end.

But we are straying from Rozel Bay. The wandering sheep having turned up, seats were resumed; the driver—who, opposed to the conductor, was somewhat grave and silent—whipped up his horses, and away we dashed up-hill, over the hard, white, well-kept road. We bowled through narrow, picturesque Jersey lanes, where now and then trees overarched; past old farm-houses with ecclesiastical-looking gateways in the outer walls in the early English style or the Norman; until, on nearing Anne Port, we swept round by the Druidical remains.

The car made no pause, but H. and I had seen and revelled in them on Saturday. They were very perfect of their kind, giving out their influence to a marked degree. Though small, they bear long contemplation, and will take you back in imagination to those far-off times when the Druids were yet a people of the earth, and worshipped here in their rude form, but to the best of their lights.

Mont Orgueil, now boldly overlooking the sea, had then no existence; nor yet the houses now scattered about as tokens of life and civilization; neither the small church that stood in that quaint nook by the road side, symbol and result of Divine revelation. But it was strange, even to mystery, to go back in thought to days when island, and sea and sky were all as now; to that sun which day by day had declined as it was declining now; age after age rolling onwards with no change in sky or stars, things above the earth or things under the earth: change only in mankind, race giving place to race, and over all, the inevitable law of progress.

But to-day the car kept on its way; the travellers seemed satisfied with a passing view. We went on downhill towards the castle, in full view of the small town of Gorey, the harbour, and the sea that gleamed and shimmered like the changing colours of an opal. Then a halt within the precincts of Mont Orgueil. But having gone over it on Saturday we had no desire for a second inspection. So whilst the little band of excursionists (including one or two newly-married couples, who trod upon air) mounted the rugged pathway to the castle, H. and I went off to Cæsar's Tower, and from the picturesque ruin absorbed the beauty of sea and sky, the small harbour with its fishing boats, the long coast line, point beyond point, the more distant French shores. The rocks below us were steep, and broken, and beautiful; round to our left stretched the greensward, a few fishermen's cottages bordered the shore. Yet further, stretched out St. Catherine's breakwater, begun by the government as a harbour, and abandoned after much labour and cost.



Then round on the soft green turf at the side of the castle, we made our way to the little French-looking village, with its long straight row of houses bordering the quay. We had it and its little pier to ourselves. It was as quiet as a place abandoned. No sign of life anywhere, except on the little Government steamer, where the men were rubbing up the brass work in a lazy, good-tempered sort of way peculiar to their kind. Our car rested on its oars in front of the only inn the place seemed to possess—probably more than sufficient for the demands imposed upon Gorey. "*Ici on loge à pied et à cheval*," must have been almost a superfluous announcement; and certainly the outlook upon the harbour mud at low water was not an enticing prospect.

Nevertheless, there was something quaint about Gorey, and the irregular houses at right angles with the long, straight road relieved the stiffness of the better portion of the village. There was a brightness about it; and you had only to cast your eyes upwards at the venerable castle, which literally threw its shadow across the village, and the place at once became not only bright, but romantic, historical, dignified.

There was life, too, as we looked now, for the sightseers, with conductor at their head and custodian in the rear, were wending their way down the narrow, broken path, one behind another, like an orderly string of turkeys. A great height it seemed, for the descent to the harbour is steep and abrupt, disclosing wonderful views of extraordinary back-yards, and small gardens that possibly might become Arcadias, but certainly were at present waste places.

I often think—to digress slightly—that back gardens retired from public gaze are an index to their owners' minds and characters and will tell you whether they are well or ill-trained. And how important is a well-trained mind, with order and system largely developed! What a difference it makes to life; not only to the individual, but to those who have to live with him. A place for everything, and everything in its place. A time for all things, also. How easily it causes the wheels of life's machinery to move along; how calmly life's current flows towards the great sea that awaits it at the end!

Down came the little band, and soon we were once more on the wing. Up dashed the car through the village, followed by a posse of urchins who yelled lustily for half-pence, with a persistence that almost deserved reward. We turned round by the coast road, passing amongst other institutions a manufactory for cider, where they were crushing apples with an energy denoting a brisk trade. Oyster beds may fail, and coal mines cease to yield, but the earth brings forth abundantly her many harvests, and in spite of the blue ribbon the world in general has not gone in for total abstinence. Nor do I see why it should. To people are given all things richly to enjoy, if they will only eat and drink in moderation, giving thanks. Vine growers and cider makers may work with energy and without fear.

The sun was going down in splendour. All day long the sky had been cloudless. Shadows were falling athwart the landscape, relieving it from the flatness of midday. Tones and colours deepened. The sea rolled in a sort of liquid rainbow. It broke and plashed about the rocks in little eddies and white foam. The train from Gorey passed us and went on its road to St. Helier. Ours was the better way. Nothing could have been pleasanter, more restoring to tired nerves than this travelling through the air hour after hour, with just sufficient stoppage to break the monotony, and give a fresh current to one's thoughts. Towards five o'clock we found ourselves once more in the busy town. The car dashed through the narrow streets at an alarming pace, and with tremendous clatter. By degrees its passengers were disposed of, and last of all it landed us safe and sound at Bree's Stopford Hotel. Nothing, from beginning to end, could have been pleasanter than the day. The weather contributed much to this. It was more perfect and Arcadian than weather can often be on earth. The air sparkled with sunshine and light and laughter; zephyrs blew a soft, intoxicating breeze; one felt in Paradise; an experience only to be found amidst the beauties of nature on such perfect days. Nothing else will give it; not the finest picture that ever was painted, or the sweetest song that ever was sung, or the best poem that ever was written. For he who is in harmony with these beauties seems raised into intimate communion with the world unseen.

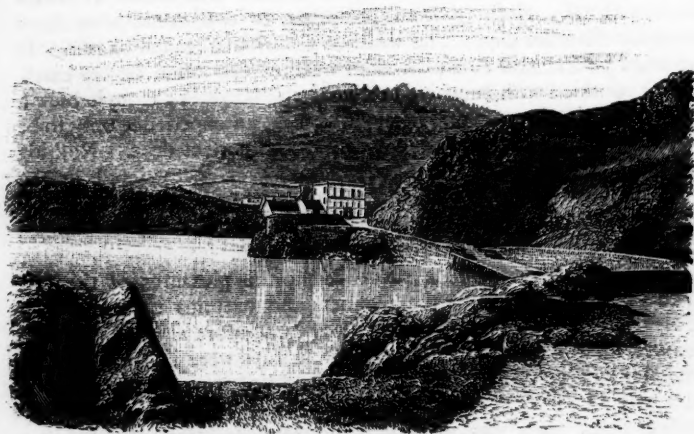
Evening and table d'hôte succeeded to the pleasures of the day. Again we were amused by the manners and customs of the visitors. Newly-married couples were in force; and the more ancient, who had dreamed their dream, and to whom these days were in the long ago, seemed to enjoy the happiness of those who as yet were not disillusioned.

That night there was to be a grand representation at the circus, patronised by the élite of Jersey from the governor downwards. It was reported good—and being the only form of dissipation then going on, was extensively frequented. So much so that the manager, out of the fulness of his heart, that night began a little speech by way of returning thanks, opening it in a familiar and friendly way with the words "My dear Governor," in the course of which he grew somewhat confused; gave up one evening's proceeds to a specified charity; and then, warming with his subject and waxing impulsive, on the spot extended the stay of the circus yet one more evening, "the proceeds of which should be devoted"—here he came to a perplexed pause, cleverly rounded off at last by—"to another charity hereafter to be decided on."

We thought we also would go and see the horsemanship, and laugh at the clowns, and applaud the cleverness of the riders. Accordingly we plunged into the mazes of St. Helier. The night was dark and we were bold. By this time I had found out that H.'s "bump of locality" was a mere delusion as far as this place was concerned, and I made en-

quiries at our first doubtful point. It seemed more dignified to ask for the Marine Hotel than for the circus, and I entered a shop with a gravity befitting a professor's chair. It did not answer. Nothing ever does with some people, except the downright, straightforward course, even in the most trifling matters. I speak with authority, and from personal experience. Some people have only to sneeze, and if they particularly wish it kept secret, in less than a week the news will have laughed to scorn the great wall of China, and penetrated into the interior.

So "the lady who kept the shop"—as schoolboys say—was too clever for us. Dissipation was writ upon our faces, and our artfully-concealed purpose was to her as clear as daylight. "I suppose you



BOULEY BAY.

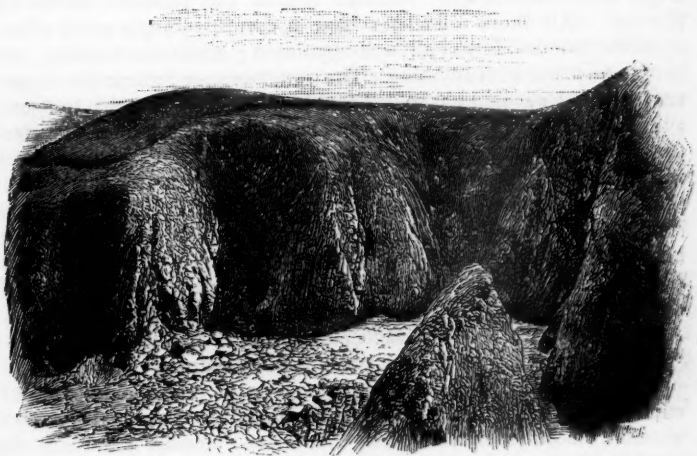
want the circus," she said, without any point of interrogation, and with a condescending tone it was impossible to resent; and we confessed her a woman of discernment. Then followed directions to turn nine times to the right and eight times to the left, and cross a square at right angles, and go straight down past the hospital, and we should in time reach the esplanade and the show. Flaring torches, a brass band, and a gaping, wide-mouthed, waddling crowd would announce its precise locality.

We worked out this problem mathematically, and were rewarded: more than ever thankful for having pitched our tent in Bree's Hotel. All round about, it was a species of Bedlam broken loose, with the disadvantage of its continuing, since there were no keepers to restore order.

One swallow is very much like another swallow, and the rule applies to circuses. But not every circus erects a throne for a

governor, and prepares its bills on white satin. The performance was excellent, the clowns were witty, and fair equestrians jumped through hoops and burst the bonds of an alarming amount of tissue paper. Everybody was amiable and appreciative, and when the end came, and the audience were dismissed to the strains of the National Anthem, it was a truly loyal crowd that dispersed to the four quarters of St. Helier. There is nothing like putting people into a good humour to set them glowing with themselves and all around them, and bring out their best qualities and good emotions.

We walked home under the starshine. Wonderfully bright and flashing were these heavenly bodies. No sooner do you get away



NEAR GRÈVE DE LECQ.

from this good old England than the fact strikes you, and the stars arrest your attention. We must pay for our privileges. A heavy atmosphere makes living not half the existence it is in purer climes. There we tread on air, and life, apart from its care and fret—that old man of the sea that we most of us have to carry on our backs—is one long, happy day. We see things at their best, and all that is noble in man appears to come uppermost, and Heaven seems nearer.

I have mentioned Grève de Lecq as being the spot that impressed me in Jersey next to Rozel. For a sojourn of any length one would even give it the preference. There was something indefinably attractive about its small bay and substantial stone pier, the fine heights on either side, the rocks and points of land beyond. It was delicious to lie upon the reddish sands that threw a sort of glow over everything, and listen to the surging of the incoming tide, or the ripple of an inland stream that here emptied itself into the sea. We had

reached it through a lovely avenue of trees, small, certainly, but beautiful, that arched and met overhead and admitted gleams and glints of sunshine more lovely than the sun's full glare. On the one hand the trees extended to quite a plantation, on the other a grassy valley spread its fertile slopes and sheltered the grave-looking cows that limped about with a leg and a horn fastened to each other, so that they might not knock off the apples from the trees that would otherwise have been at their mercy.

Then down near the water there was a comfortable hotel built of light wood. I think it was called the Pavilion, and consisted, apparently, of one large room and a few bed-rooms above. But it was bright and cheerful, and reminded one of the pleasant houses in Norway. All these influences have a correspondingly good effect upon the mind. It was all well-appointed; admirable cooking; no fault to be found with anything. The owner appeared above his present station, and I was told was so. I could not help thinking that to spend a time in retirement here in May or October; to lie day after day upon the sands, listening to the sea, undisturbed by tourists; to roam at will about the rocks and hills, and paddle one's canoe in and out of the bays and curves—what a delight it would be! I longed to give it a trial; to spend here even a week; to drink in all that ozone, absorb all those flashes of colour, all that sunshine and pure atmosphere. But, with the amount of time at command, this luxury and delight was impossible. Some future day, perhaps, it might be. And then—would it be the same?—blue skies and laughing hours? “Before I come, or after I am gone, the roses always bloom.”

Grève de Lecq was the Ultima Thule of our second day's excursion, and we returned through St. Peter's Valley: wildest, most wooded, most romantic valley in Jersey: really deserving the name, with its velvet slopes, running streams, and wooded heights. No other valley in Jersey will compare with it. If it did not reach the point of grandeur, it certainly did that of great beauty. In comparison with the size of the island, its extent was considerable. Here and there felled trees lay upon the ground, with the picturesque effect they always have. Now a slight distance of brushwood opened up, and now we passed one of those wells that are a feature in Jersey scenery. Finally, at the end of the valley, we came upon tall factory chimneys that seemed to have no business there, and certainly, like gangmen in frosty weather, appeared to have no work to do. Silent, desolate, and deserted they looked. An old water-mill, with its dilapidated wheel, was much more in harmony with its surroundings.

Plémont was our chief *pièce de résistance* on the third day. The hotel stands high and dry on the very summit of the cliff, overlooking the sea. In summer, you have a glorious air, bracing as any part of Jersey can be, but cold and bleak in midwinter, dreary and desolate. The view far and near was splendid. All the Channel

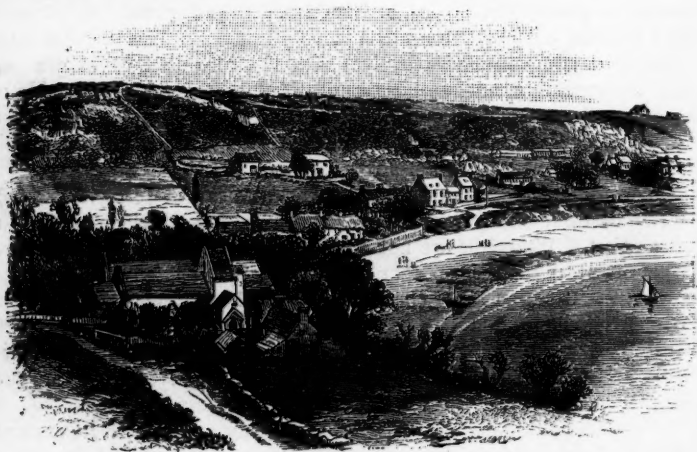
Islands were visible, rising sleepily out of the calm and lovely water: Guernsey, Sark, and Alderney, and the little islets of Herm and Jethou. The Paternosters lay to the right: a reef of dangerous rocks that must often have been less kind than cruel, unworthy of their name.

Anyone writing a guide to Jersey might make the record "Plémont, famous for its lobsters:" for late as the season was, the inn furnished some splendid specimens. But it is famous for more than that. The rocks are grand and precipitous. There are caves, too, only to be entered at low water. A small bridge spans a chasm, below which you may jump from rock to rock and point to point, down to the sandy beach. Of the caves I can say nothing. We saw them not. The "cruel, crawling tide," though receding, was still too high to admit of investigation. And though we stayed some time, it was too high for our purpose up to the very last. So like the fox with the grapes, we consoled ourselves with the idea that caves after all are disappointing, not repaying one half the time for the trouble of groping about in the dark, the danger of plunging head-first into a pool of icy water, or of dashing one's brains out against a sharp bit of rock lying in wait for the unwary.

The rocks here were perhaps the finest we saw in Jersey. A small waterfall tumbled over the cliffs, with, in rainy weather, possibly a fine effect. Waterfalls are not the strong point of Jersey, any more than its trees. But we cannot have everything, and Jersey has sufficient attraction in its coast scenery, its lanes and its lovely sea, the delicious productions of its soil, and its interesting, soft-eyed cows. A great deal of the coast might be traced from Plémont; bays and points stretching out in fine bold outlines. Just round the further point was St. Owen's, largest of all the Jersey bays.

Our last halting-place that day—St. Brelade's Bay, with its ancient church dating back to the 12th century—was also one of the most interesting. The white sands are firm and pleasant, and the sea rolls steadily up over a sloping beach. Here, whilst H. and I explored the shore, we found the excursionists grouping themselves round the car in telling attitudes, before the hotel. At first we almost fancied they were about to break into a part song, like German students out for a day's ramble; and an unknown individual who superintended the pastures might have been the leader. But it soon appeared that all these preparations were photographic; an infliction that has often been sensibly compared to tooth drawing. To spare ourselves the pain and penalty of refusing our jovial conductor, who was looking about him as if he felt rather than saw the absence of certain of his flock, we extended our walk upon the sands beyond a friendly point of rock. Here we were close to the church and the tombs, and, like Hervey, might have meditated upon the vanity of human life and the fading of human hopes. But we did nothing of the kind. We threw pebbles into the water and enjoyed the bubbles and the rings and the splashes, and revelled in

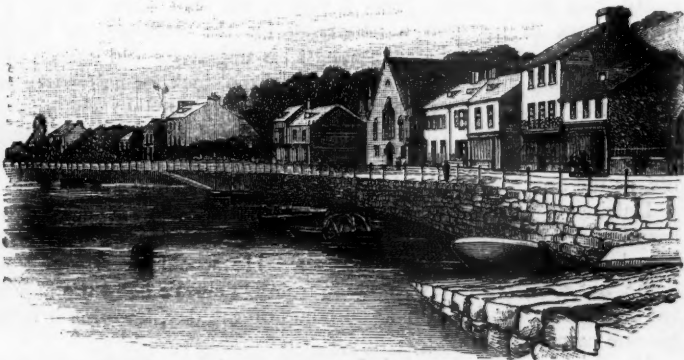
all the beauty that surrounded us and made glad the heart. When we returned, the inquisitor with his black pall and dark instrument of torture had retired, and the charmed groups had ceased to attitudinise. They were, indeed, preparing to mount, and before long we were whirling through St. Aubyn's Bay, making good way towards St. Helier. We entered it by the Esplanade. Elizabeth Castle lay to our right, and the rocky shore was flat and dry and strewn with seaweed. Opposite the circus was the little railway station that rejoiced in the name of Cheapside, and conjured up sudden visions of crowded thoroughfares and the bustle and wear of a great city. As before, the car gradually dismissed its freight, ending with Bree's Hotel.



ST. BRELADE'S BAY.

Three days of unalloyed pleasure and profit. Days of wonderful weather : weather that comes to us in our dreams, and in the choicest climes of earth, where even the easterly winds have a kindly touch. We never had any more days like them. Even when the sky was blue, and the sun shone, that nameless, indescribable charm which seems to belong to paradise, and is only now and then lent to earth, was absent. These are the days which haunt us through life, and stand out above others ; and we look back upon them, and feel that the world was fair, and we were young, and all was happiness and hope, and everything would last for ever. And when the days come of realities and disenchantment, when the sunshine has lost its glow for ever, and the moonlight its poetry, we wrap ourselves in the memory of the past, and hope that it will all come back to us in the unseen world of eternal youth, where sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Our time came for saying good-bye to Jersey. We left rather sooner than we had intended, because on a certain day a boat left at 10 a.m. for Weymouth, and all other days the Southampton boat left at half-past seven. This necessitated getting up in the dark, and turning out in the cold : an unpleasant alternative one avoids when possible. It was an exquisite morning, warm as summer. Never had the sea been more placid. Not a breath stirred its surface. The tide was not high, and the steamer lay outside the harbour. We had to reach it in a small boat, and were amused at the agonies of a lady whose box had not turned up, and who refused to budge an inch without her treasure. The boatmen offered to make a second journey for it, which only made her yet more frantic. At length it appeared,



ST. AUBYN'S BAY.

and turned out large enough to contain Jumbo, and very nearly drowned us all.

But at last we were safely on board the little paddle boat, and soon after ten o'clock she set sail. As on approaching, so now in leaving we steered near to, and traced the rocky coast, but with greater interest and with a more intimate acquaintance. We had cause to leave it with regret, for our days there had been days of unalloyed pleasure. H. fondly looked down at some of our luggage under the bridge, where reposed our cabbage stalks in all their ugliness and all their pride. Mementoes certainly, but the least interesting part of Jersey ; libels, in fact, upon the island.

We were now on our way to Guernsey. But there is a time and place for all things. The end of a day's march is the season for repose ; and the end of a paper cannot be made the introduction to fresh ground. Guernsey must wait until next month, and it can afford to bide its time.

## DR. BALL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MOLLY BAWN."

HE was a very little man, with a cherubic face, and a large soul, and nothing at all awe-inspiring about him. His eyes shone through his glasses anxiously, as though in eager search of any good that might be lying about amongst his parishioners. He thought no evil of any man and, in truth, no man thought evil of him.

He had been twenty years a curate, but had never sighed for higher wage or betrayed a hankering for the flesh-pots of Egypt. Contented he was and happy amongst his ungrateful old women and surly old men. He went to bed at eight o'clock, or half past; he never went into society: indeed, there was hardly any into which to go in the benighted Irish village in which he lived. He knew as little about the subtle changes that creep now and again into fashionable life, as the South Sea Islander.

Dulcinea—a charming girl of eighteen, and a great heiress, his friend and godchild—would often walk down to his cottage to see him, but he would seldom go to her. He would never dine from home, but sometimes he would take from Dulcinea's hand the cup of tea she had ready for him at all hours of the day, knowing it to be his one carnal delight.

His Rector was old and infirm, and for the most part resided in Italy. In fact, the little doctor did all the work of Inchinabagga, which was the somewhat outlandish name of his parish.

Dulcinea, with an unpardonable play upon his name, had christened him her Candy-ball: saying in excuse that she had a right to give him any name she pleased because he had given her hers—which did not please her—at the font, many winters ago now.

"Yet, after all I don't think my sobriquet suits you: candy-balls are such *hard* things," she said, tenderly, as she walked with him up and down his little garden-path one morning in mid-winter, hugging his arm the while. "I'm sure I have nearly smashed all my teeth with them over and over again. And you, with your tender heart could never hurt me or any living thing. I know—and Gerald says it too—that you are the best and dearest man in all the world."

Having exploded this little shell, she waited somewhat anxiously for the result.

"Now—now—I am afraid you have been writing to Gerald again," said the Doctor, stopping in his walk and regarding her with what he believed to be severity.

"Yes, I have," said Miss Vane, promptly. "Isn't it good of me to

tell you the truth out quite plainly? I'll tell you something else, too. If you say even one small scolding word to me, I shall run away from you, and you shan't see me again for a week."

"Dear me, dear me, this is terrible!" said the Doctor, almost tragically.

Now, Miss Dulcinea Vane, besides being an heiress, was also the Bishop's ward. And the Bishop was sternly desirous of doing his duty by her—which meant turning a cold shoulder on all needy young men who paid their addresses to her. Their name was Legion, so that the poor Bishop had by no means a good time of it.

There had come nothing serious of it all, however, until about six months ago, when Gerald Wygram had descended upon Inchinabagga as if from the clouds. He said he had come for the fishing, which was excellent in the neighbourhood; but having seen Miss Vane one day in the curate's garden, his desire for trout suddenly died a natural death, and his desire for something else grew into a mighty longing. He was a tall young man, handsome, and; worse than all, eloquent. He talked Dulcinea's heart out of her body, before she woke to the knowledge that she had one.

There was absolutely no fault to be found with him beyond the fact that he was the fifth son of a by-no-means wealthy Baronet. This was a sin past forgiveness in everybody's eyes, except Dulcinea's. She was reasoned with, expostulated with, *threatened*. All to no good.

The Bishop in a long letter—exquisitely written and perfectly worded—finally *commanded* Miss Vane to cease to think again of this Gerald Wygram (this clerk in the Foreign Office, with a paltry stipend) for even one moment! To which Dulcinea sent a meek reply, to the effect that as usual her guardian's behests should be obeyed to the letter. She would indeed *never* think of Gerald Wygram again for that insignificant portion of time called a moment, but daily, hourly, until the family vault claimed her for its own. Whereupon the Bishop wrote to Doctor Ball, as her spiritual adviser, begging him to bring her to a proper frame of mind, and to see, generally, what was to be done.

It was wonderful how little *could* be done; and Dulcinea would promise nothing. So Sir Watkyn Wygram, Gerald's father, was written to; and he, though mightily amused at the whole affair, took the law into his own hands, and ordered Gerald to leave Inchinabagga without delay.

There were certain reasons why it was best to obey this order, and so, with many kisses and vows of eternal constancy, the lovers parted. They felt their constancy might be put to the test, as Dulcinea was barely eighteen, and by her late father's will, was not to come of age until her twenty-third year. Five years to wait! An eternity to an impatient heart!—A month's trial having proved to them that life

without each other was an earthly Purgatory, they resolved to try one more expedient to soften the man in the apron and the long silk stockings.

"What is terrible?" asked Dulcinea of the Curate, as they walked up and down the garden.

"This correspondence with Gerald, when you *know* the Bishop —"

"Well, I won't do it again," she said. "It would be a stupid thing to write to him, wouldn't it," continued Dulcinea, innocently, "when I can see him every day?"

"See him!" Dr. Ball stopped short again, and gazed at her over his glasses. "Why you don't mean to tell me that —"

"Yes I do, indeed. He is staying down at the white cottage just like last spring. He says he has come for the fishing."

"Fishing in January!"

"Well, if it isn't for that, it is for something else. And you can't think how nice he is looking. And he is so fond of you! Do you know you were the very first person he asked for."

"Did he now!" said the Doctor, with a broadly gratified smile. Then he recollected himself, and brought himself back to a proper frame of mind with the help of a dry little cough. "The Bishop and Sir Watkyn will be greatly annoyed," he said.

"I don't care," returned Dulcinea, rebelliously. "What fault can the Bishop find with him?"

"He is not your equal, my dear."

"I hope you are not growing worldly?" said Dulcinea, with a severity that to the poor doctor sounded very terrible.

"But he is *very* poor, my dear," he said, faltering, and feeling himself the most worldly creature on earth.

"And is his poverty the only thing against him?"

"The Bishop has other objections."

"Oh! I know all about that," said she, with superb disdain. "I know he has been meanly trying to spy out some trumpery little peccadilloes belonging to poor Gerald's Oxford days. It is my belief the Bishop did far worse himself when *he* was at Oxford. I hate a spy!"

"But, my dear —"

"And if Gerald was a little bit wild at college—I—I—think it was *delightful* of him! I can't bear goody-goody young men. I should quite despise him if I thought he had never done anything he oughtn't to do."

"Dulcinea, this is horrible!" said the Doctor. "If your guardian —"

"I know my guardian," with a contemptuous shrug of her pretty little shoulders—"and you would, too, only you are too good to fathom his schemes. Do you think a real Christian would forbid two people to be happy? No, you don't. A real Christian would

help them to be happy. And—" turning to him suddenly, with a quick, radiant smile—"you *will* help us?" She spoke with an amount of assurance she was far from feeling, but determined to play her last card with a high courage. "You will go to the Bishop yourself, and plead for us. He respects you (it is the only sign of grace about him); he will listen to you, and you will bring us back word that you have succeeded. You will give us that bad old man's blessing; we shall fall upon your neck and embrace you, and then you will marry us."

"Stop—stop," said the Doctor. "I daren't do this thing. The Bishop's face is set against Gerald, and ——"

"Then you are to set your face against the Bishop's and turn his in favour of Gerald. Yes, you must indeed! Oh! my dear god-father, you have never refused me anything in all my life; do not begin to do so now. Tell him I am sick, dying ——"

"But, my dear girl, I never saw you looking better."

"Never mind, I shall *get* sick; tell him, too, that Gerald is such a regular attendant at church, and that ——"

"I *can't*, Dulcinea. All last spring, Sunday after Sunday, I missed his head in the Rectory pew, where he was supposed to sit."

All the pews in the church at Inchinabagga were so built that only the heads of the parishioners could be seen, staring over them as if impaled.

"Perhaps he *was* there, but sitting low," said Dulcinea, mendaciously.

"No. He wasn't sitting there at all," said the curate sorrowfully. "He was up the South stream, at Owen's farm, fishing for trout."

"Well, even if he was," said Gerald's sweetheart, boldly, "surely there was some excuse for him. Sundays should not be good fishing days, and on every one of those you mention the trout were literally jumping out of the water, and crying to be caught! He told me so. Why, the Bishop himself would have gone fishing on such days."

"I must request, Dulcinea ——"

"Well, if he wouldn't, he would have been dying to go—it is all the same," said Miss Vane, airily. "Come, you will go to the Bishop—you will do what you can for us, won't you?"

"What," nervously, "am I to say if I *do* go. Mind, I have not promised."

"Say that Gerald is worthier of me than I am of Gerald. That will be a good beginning; be *sure* you say that. Make me out a most perverse girl, of whom you can get *no* good ——"

"Dulcinea," said the Doctor, with mournful reproach, "in all these years have I failed to show you the graciousness of truth?"

"Oh! but what is the truth in comparison with Gerald!" said Miss Vane, with an impatient gesture of the right hand.

Quite overwhelmed by this last proof of the uselessness of his ministry, Dr. Ball maintained a crushed silence.

"You will say just what I have told you—won't you?" asked Dulcinea, anxiously.

"I shall say you have certain faults I would gladly see amended," said the Curate earnestly. "He has been of much service to the Church. He is a great and good man. Well," he continued, with a sigh, after a pause, "I will go to him and intercede for you. I shall write and ask him for an interview—but I doubt if good will come of it. And what shall I do there, in a strange place, amongst strange faces, after all these years?"

"He is such an old bore," said Miss Vane, irreverently, "that I don't believe he could form an opinion on *any* subject." In which she wronged the Bishop.

"I must beg you won't speak of your Bishop like that," said the Curate earnestly. "He has been of much service to the Church. He is a great and good man. Well," he continued, with a sigh, after a pause, "I will go to him and intercede for you. I shall write and ask him for an interview—but I doubt if good will come of it. And what shall I do there, in a strange place, amongst strange faces, after all these years?"

In truth, it seemed a terrible thing to him, this undertaking. He would have to leave his home, for the first time these ten years, and go beyond his beloved boundary, and launch himself, as it were, upon the world.

But he wrote to the Bishop, nevertheless, asking for an interview, without stating the object he had in view, and received a very friendly letter from that dignitary in return, who, indeed, was a very kindly man, au fond, and most wilfully misunderstood by Dulcinea. The Bishop granted Dr. Ball the desired interview with pleasure, and begged he would come to the Palace early in the ensuing week, not on business alone, but as a guest for a day or two.

On the Monday following Dr. Ball rose betimes, and having shaved himself with extra care, and donned his best clothes, (oh! that he should have to call them so!) he started for the cathedral town in the heaviest snowstorm they had known that year.

On entering the episcopal drawing-room he found there, not only the Bishop and his wife, Mrs. Craik, but a goodly company of guests. He was at first bewildered by the lights, and the fine small chatter, and the frou-frou of the silken gowns, and in his progress up the room fell over several chairs and tables. But presently he came to his senses and a comfortable ottoman close to his hostess—a handsome woman with great kindly eyes and a delicious voice.

He saw that she was pouring out tea, and that everyone was drinking it. He saw, too, that there was a good deal of cake going about, and thin bread-and-butter, and some delicate wafery little things he had never seen before. He glanced at the ormolu clock on the chimney-piece behind him, and saw it was nearly six o'clock. "And a very reasonable hour for tea, too," he said to himself, complacently, and ate a good deal more bread-and-butter, and told himself the tea was excellent. He looked round him and beamed through his glasses

at the pretty girls in their charming gowns, and declared them to his heart a sight worth seeing. Two or three of them, struck by the benevolence of his smile, smiled back at him, so that his satisfaction was complete.

Then a dismal, booming sound came from the hall. The Doctor started on hearing it, and nearly dropped his cup of sèvres.

"The gong," said a little woman near him, getting up with graceful languor from her chair.

"First bell! Who would have thought it was so late?" said a tall, pretty girl. "How time does fly sometimes!" The Doctor in a vague way had noticed that this last speaker had had a young man whispering to her for the last half-hour.

Then, as if by magic, everyone seemed to disappear. They melted away through the open doorway before his very eyes. *Where* were they going? To their rooms? The little Doctor who had been puzzled by his afternoon tea, an entirely new custom to him—now grew mildly speculative and somewhat bewildered. Seeing the signs of hesitation that enshrouded him, the Bishop went up to him, and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"You will like to go too," he said, kindly, "after your long drive." There were no trains in those days to or from Inchinabagga.

"Certainly, my lord," said Dr. Ball, mildly; "but where?"

"Why, to your room," said the Bishop.

"Ah! to be sure," returned the Doctor. Then he shook hands with the Bishop, rather to that good man's surprise, and would probably have performed the same ceremony with Mrs. Craik, but she had disappeared.

The lamps were lighted everywhere, and a tall servant in powder handed him a silver candlestick at his bed-room door, to which haven he had conducted him. Inside, the bed-room fire was burning brilliantly, and the Doctor sinking into an arm-chair gave himself up to thought. He meant to arrange his speech about *Dulcinea's* engagement to be delivered to-morrow, but somehow his thoughts wandered.

"Evidently they dine early"—(they took this form at last)—"*Evidently*. I suppose they thought *I* did too, but I depended on getting something here. A mutton chop now, or even a little bit of cold mutton with my tea—it *is* a long drive, as he said himself." Not that it mattered really. They had all been kind, *most* kind; Mrs. Craik especially. Beautiful woman, Mrs. Craik. He was a little, perhaps—well—a little hungry certainly, but a good night's rest is better than meat or drink; and he had often been hungry before when on a long day's tramp; and better be hungry and receive such a kind reception as had been accorded him, than—than —

The fire was splendid, and the wax candles burning here and there were full of sleepy suggestions. The Doctor roused himself by an effort, and spread his hands over the glowing coals, and enjoyed the glorious heat, and almost forgot the mutton chop. When he had

bobbed nearly into the flames, and recovered himself many times, it occurred to the little Doctor that another and a final bob might land him in the cinders; so he pulled himself together heroically, and rose from his chair. He yawned gently. How quiet the house was. No doubt everyone was gone to bed. Had he not heard the Bishop say they were gone to their rooms, and for what—after tea—except for repose? He was tired. He, too, would go to bed.

Then the good little gentleman knelt down, and said his evening prayers. He prayed most sincerely for the Bishop in spite of that missing chop, and calmly, with a conscience devoid of offence, began to make preparations for his couch. If he had any doubts about the earliness of the hour, he put it down to an episcopal rule that all should retire at an appointed time and so found it good in his eyes. To his primitive mind (a mind that had never wandered from a strict belief in the customs of the earlier part of the century), a dinner at half past seven was a thing unknown. If he had heard of any such absurdity, he had forgotten it. As I have told you, he was as dead to all innovations that had taken place since "Sailor Billy" was king, as the babe unborn; and yet it was the sixty-fifth year of the nineteenth century.

Finally he kicked off his boots, and crept gladly into bed. It was a bed so comfortable that in two minutes he was sound asleep. He was indeed just entering into a beatific dream where his poorest old widow had received provisions sufficient in quantity to last her for several years, when a sound rang through the room, driving sleep affrighted from his lids. *Where* had he heard that sound before? The gong! the gong! What! morning so soon!

He sprang up in bed, and looked vaguely round him. As he did so, the door opened, and a young woman entered the room.

"Eh?" said the Doctor, staring hard at her. He felt he was at a disadvantage in his night cap, and could not help wishing at the moment that the tassel would not dangle so insanely. He wished, too, that some more intellectual remark had risen to his lips, but the wish was productive of no good. The young woman stared at him in return with undisguised wonder, but from speech she refrained.

"Eh?" said the Doctor again; then, remembering that she had refused to make reply to this monosyllable before, he struggled with himself, and added some words to it. "What is this?" he said, confusedly. "What hour is it? Does his lordship rise before *daylight*?" He bobbed the tassel at her as he said this. A most confounding tassel! of abnormal stoutness and unparalleled length. The maid went down before it. She drew nearer to the door, and laid her grasp as a precautionary measure upon the handle.

"Lawks, sir," she said, "whatever are you lying a-bed for? Dinner will be served in two mingits."

With that she darted into the corridor outside, and fled from the "mad gentleman" to the safe regions below.

"Dinner!" repeated the Doctor to himself, in a dazed tone; and

then, "Bless me!" He had not even time to repent him of this rash oath, as he called to mind the bare two minutes left him; and springing from his bed, he plunged into his clothes again.

With all the haste he made, however, he did not succeed in being less than ten minutes late as he entered the drawing-room. All the other guests were there, but were fortunately arguing busily over a huge portfolio of Italian views. Mrs. Craik was standing on the hearth-rug somewhat apart. With a deep blush and a very distressed countenance, the Curate advanced towards her.

"Ah, Dr. Ball! As I said before, it was a long drive," said the Bishop, graciously, leaving the group near the portfolio, to come up to him. "Confess the truth, now; say you fell asleep before your fire. I often do it myself—often."

"It was hardly that, my lord," said the Doctor, to whom even pre-variation was hateful.

"Ah, ah!" said the Bishop, laughing. "Did anyone ever, I wonder, confess to those forty winks? You were tired though, eh?"

"I *was* tired," said the little Doctor, simply. He might have let it so rest, but his conscience pricked him. In leaving the matter thus, was he not leading his host and Bishop astray? His little, round, guileless face assuming even a deeper tinge of red, he turned to the Bishop again.

"The fact is," he said, earnestly, "that when at home, I dine early, and take my tea, when—when *you* take *yours*. Then after a couple of hours' reading, I go to bed. Having no reading with me to-night, and feeling fatigued, I went to bed straight. I did not understand about the dinner, my lord. That is *actually* how it was. I beg, Madam," turning to Mrs. Craik with the old-fashioned courtesy, that all his years of poverty and seclusion had not been able to steal from him, "you will try to forgive me, for having had the misfortune to keep you waiting."

The Bishop had suddenly found some fault, or some remarkable virtue in his shoe-buckle. He bent obstinately over it. Only his wife, however, could see by the shaking of his shoulders that he was convulsed with laughter. She launched at him a withering dart from her usually mild blue eyes, then pulled her satin skirts aside, and beckoned to Dr. Ball to sit down beside her.

"You must not think you have kept us waiting for even one moment," she said, with extreme sweetness. "I don't believe dinner is ready even yet; cook is *so* unpunctual!"

Even as these words passed her lips the footman announced the meal in question, in an aggrieved tone suggestive of many abusive words addressed to him by an irate cook. Nevertheless, I feel sure Mrs. Craik's kindly fib was forgiven her in the highest courts of all.

After dinner the Bishop led Dr. Ball into the library, and with a cheery: "Now, let me know how I can help you," threw himself into a lounging-chair, and prepared to listen to some small parish trouble.

Thus addressed, all the Curate's wits at once deserted him. In a mean, paltry fashion, they fled, leaving him utterly stranded. He had meant to be more than ordinarily eloquent about Dulcinea's love affair; but now brought face to face with the foe, he found himself barren of words. Yet speak he must; and so, boldly, curtly, tersely, he stated his mission, and expressed his hope of obtaining for Dulcinea permission to marry the man of her heart.

To say the Bishop was astounded would be to say little. He was so amazed that he leant back in his chair, and for some minutes was incapable of an answer. Then he began a diatribe about fortune-hunters, and his duty as a guardian, and Dulcinea's wealth, and her general impracticability. When he had got so far he paused, and looked at the Curate, as if for a further lead. But Dr. Ball was sorely in want of a lead himself. He was in fact frightened out of his life. It seemed such presumption to sit there, and argue with his Bishop! What *was* he to say? Silence was impossible with the Bishop sitting there staring at him in expectant impatience; speech seemed equally so! At last his lips unclosed, and some words unbidden rose to them.

"She is such a very *good* girl," he murmured, in a dull, heavy tone, hardly knowing *what* he said. Could anything be tamer, more meaningless? He felt his cause was lost.

"Yes, yes, no doubt," said his lordship testily, somewhat put out, he hardly knew why, by the Curate's simple remark. "I have hardly had a good opportunity of sifting her character *so* far, as she has obstinately refused of late every invitation sent her by Mrs. Craik. But I am glad to hear you speak of her so favourably."

Again he paused, and looked expectantly at the Doctor, who felt the blood mount surging to his brow. Oh! for the tongue of a Demosthenes to sing his dear girl's praises! It was denied him! His very brain seemed dry as his parched lips. Yet speak he must.

"I never met *so good* a girl," he stammered again in the same heavy, impressive tone, his shamed eyes on the ground. Good gracious, was he never to get beyond this lukewarm formula?

"No doubt, no doubt," said the Bishop, with growing discomposure. "The fact that she *is* so admirable a girl as you describe her proves to me that there is all the more reason why I should feel myself bound, as her guardian, to look after her interests, and shield her from all harm; from *fortune-hunters* especially. And this Mr.—ah—Wygram seems to me nothing better than one of that class."

Then he looked once more questioningly at Dr. Ball, as though defying him to take up the cudgels *here*. It was a piercing look this time, and utterly wrecked the small remaining wits the poor little Curate still possessed. He sank deeper into his chair, and thought longingly of the fate of Korah.

"He is such a *good* young man," he said at last, not feebly as one might imagine, but with more than ordinary loudness, born of his distraction. Alas! alas! why did Dulcinea choose a broken reed

like him to be her lover's advocate? Oh! where were the chosen, honeyed words he had rehearsed in secret for this fatal interview? He sat covered with self-reproach, a sight to be pitied.

"Eh?" said the Bishop, with a start, stirring uneasily in his chair. Something in his companion's mild but persistent praise seemed to rebuke him. Here was a man who thought of nothing but the grandeur of moral worth! Who looked upon position, wealth, social standing, as dross in comparison with it. He, the Bishop of the diocese—who should be an example to his flock—sitting here, dealing altogether in worldly topics, such as the worth of money, was brought to bay by a poor curate who was mildly but righteously insisting on the worth of *goodness*.

"You know him intimately of course," said the Bishop, after a short pause, alluding to Gerald Wygram "You can give me an honest sketch of him as he appears to you. I have faith in your judgment; you have seen much of him, no doubt. As guardian to Miss Vane I am desirous of looking well into both sides of the question. Her happiness should be a first consideration. Now," leaning one elbow on the table and looking fixedly at the devoted curate, "give me your exact opinion of this young man."

A deadly silence followed. Now or never the unfortunate Curate felt was the moment in which to break into laudatory phrases about Dulcinea's lover. But none would come. He opened his lips; he tried to focus his thoughts. In vain!

"I think I never met so *good* a young man," he said in a tone so solemn, it might have come from the dead. To the Bishop, the sound was earnest, to Dr. Ball it meant despair!

"Indeed, indeed!" said the former who was fond of reiteration. He said it impatiently, and got up, and began to pace the floor. He was a good-hearted man and something within him seemed to warn him against forbidding the happiness of two people praised by the best man in his diocese. "It is a great responsibility," he said, striding slowly up and down the room. "He—this Mr. Wygram—has a bare subsistence, *no* prospects; and *she* has close upon £5,000 a-year. She ought to marry a title. Her father was bent on it; he as good as said so to me just a month before his death. This, that you speak of, is not a thing to be lightly done. But you give me such a high character of Mr. Wygram—you have bestowed indeed such unqualified praise on both him and Miss Vane—that you make me hesitate about refusing my consent. Who am I, that I should take it upon me to make or mar two lives? You have no doubt in your mind about their suitability to each other, have you? You, who know them, you think highly of *both*?"

Again the Bishop leaned towards him. Again that concentrated gaze fell upon the luckless Curate. Again he felt that he must speak when speech was denied him. The Bishop was waiting. Oh! the agony of *knowing* he was waiting.

"I believe it would be hard to find two such *good* young people," he said at last; and then he covered his face with his hand, and felt that now indeed it was all over, and that he was on the verge of tears.

There was a long silence. Then—"Well, well, well," said the Bishop—"I promise you to think it over. Worth, such as you have ascribed to this young man, should count before anything." It really did seem to the Bishop that Dr. Ball had uttered unlimited words of commendation about Gerald Wygram. "And he is of good birth undoubtedly. That is always something, even nowadays. Yes, I'll think it over. When you return home, Dr. Ball, which," courteously, "I hope will not be for some time yet, tell Dulcinea from me, that I shall come and stay with her at the hall very soon for a day or so, to talk all this over, and that I shall ask Mr. Wygram here to study him a little, before giving my final decision. Tell her too"—with a kindly smile directed at the astonished Curate—"that it was your hearty praise of Mr. Wygram that induced me to look into a matter that I cannot still help considering a little imprudent."

"This will be good news for Dulcinea, my lord," said the Curate, finding his voice at last when it was too late. But *was* it too late?

"I hope it will continue to be good news all her life," said the Bishop, with a sigh. He knew he would be glad to get rid of his guardian duties, and for that very reason was afraid to get rid of them. "But now for another topic," he said, cheerfully, laying his hand on the Curate's shoulder. "You know the Rector of Dreene is dead and ——" In fact he offered our little friend a rectory, with an income that quadrupled his present salary. But the Doctor shrank from him when he mentioned it.

"Nay, my lord," he said, "give it to some better man."

"I couldn't," said the Bishop.

"Give it to some better man," repeated the Curate, earnestly. "I could not leave my present place, indeed. They could not get on without me; they are, for the most part so old, and so cross. I beg you will leave me there, with my old men and women. They all know *me*, and *I* know them; and it is too late for me to begin the world afresh, with new faces and new interests."

The Bishop said nothing further then, but he took his arm, and led him into the drawing-room, where presently he drew his wife aside, and told her all about it. After which, Mrs. Craik made a great deal of the little Doctor, and treated him delicately, as if he was of extreme value: as indeed he was.

At the end of two days he went home, and told Dulcinea all the news, and she, on hearing it, took him round the neck and kissed him tenderly.

"I *knew* it," she said. "I *felt* it. Something told me you were the one person in the world to win my case for me. Dearest, sweetest, *loveliest* Dr. Ball, how shall I thank you?"

"My dear, if you only knew," faltered the Doctor.

"I *do* know. Don't you think I can appreciate you after all these years? You are so clear, so convincing. You can come so directly to the point. You can say so much that is *good*."

"I can indeed," groaned the Curate, desolated by dismal recollections. "The little I *did* say, was *all* 'good'!"

"I'm sure of it," gratefully. "Your fluency, you know, is your great point. How I should have liked to have heard you parrying successfully every one of that horrid old Bishop's attacks upon my Gerald. But, indeed, it seems to me that I *can* hear you—running through all his good qualities (and what a number he has) in that nice, eloquent, self-possessed manner that belongs to you."

"Dulcinea, hear me," said the Curate, in desperation; and then and there he made his confession. But he failed to convince Dulcinea; she steadfastly adhered to her belief that his eloquence alone had won the Bishop's consent.

"And really he can't be such a *very* bad old man after all," she said, "or he would not be capable of appreciating real worth such as yours—would he, Gerald?" For Mr. Wygram had stolen up to them in the twilight, and secured the Doctor's other arm. Miss Vane looked upon his right one in the light of a fee-simple property.

"It is the one redeeming point in his character," said Mr. Wygram, promptly. "And another thing, Dulcie: nobody shall marry us but Dr. Ball. Eh?"

"Nobody, indeed," firmly.

"My dear girl, nonsense!" said the Doctor. "You must have your Rector, if not the Bishop himself. And—of course, by-the-bye, being your guardian, it *will* be the Bishop. I am a mere nobody. It would not do at all; and you, the most influential—that is, at least, the largest proprietor in the country round!"

"You may call yourself a 'nobody' or any other bad name you like," said Dulcinea, earnestly, "but I can tell you this—*no* one but you shall ever make me Mrs. Gerald Wygram."

"Nothing shall alter that decision—not even the *Archbishop*," said Mr. Wygram, emphatically.

The Doctor protested, but in his soul I think he was pleased, and went to bed that night as happy as—I was going to say a king; but, indeed, I believe he went there ten times happier than that care-laden mortal.

And the morning brought him news. The old man, his Rector, lay dead in an Italian town, and the Bishop had appointed Dr. Ball as his successor. "So, you need not leave those happy old men and women who call you pastor," wrote the Bishop, kindly—almost tenderly.

So it was as rector, *not* as curate he made his dear girl Dulcinea Wygram.

## BABY HELENE.

SHE was only the child of the May-day,  
 That came when the sweet blossoms fell,  
 But rarer than any fair lady  
 Of whom the old poets may tell.  
 Then the days brought us everything sweeter,  
 Of sunshine and love in their train ;  
 But better than all and completer  
 Was Baby Helène.

With a kiss and a smile she came to us,  
 The sunshine of God in her hair,  
 Ah ! never a sweet wind that blew us  
 A blossom so tender and rare.  
 We sang a new May-song together,  
 New-found and of jubilant strain ;  
 Ah ! our hearts then were light as a feather,  
 With Baby Helène.

Would she stay with us—love us ? we bid her  
 Unloosen the notes of her song,  
 And tell where the sweet angels hid her,  
 And why had we waited so long.  
 Would they sorrow in Heaven to miss her ?  
 Would they wait for her, weary to pain ?  
 Would they anger to see us but kiss her—  
 Our Baby Helène ?

And all the day long, like new lovers,  
 Like words that are ever in tune,  
 Like songs the fresh May-wind discovers,  
 Like birds that are mating in June,  
 Together we loved and we wandered,  
 Forgetting of sorrow or pain,  
 Forgetting the sweets that we squandered  
 With Baby Helène.

Oh ! lips running over to kisses,  
 Red cheeks kissed to brown by the sun,  
 Shall we ever again know what bliss is,  
 When the song and the kisses are done ?  
 Oh ! baby, brown-haired, on thy tresses  
 The hands of the angels had lain,  
 And joy laughed new-born in caresses  
 Of Baby Helène.

Years went—seven years with their story,  
More bright than Aladdin's of old,  
To love and be loved was our glory,  
Our hearts were our castles of gold.  
But broken our castles, and falling,  
Hope crushed—true hearts bleeding and slain,  
God's angels in Heaven were calling  
Our Baby Helène.

Dim-eyed, and heart-broken, we waited  
The sounds of invisible things,  
While the soul of our soul was re-mated,  
Borne off on invisible wings.  
In the far away purple and golden,  
Went up an ineffable strain,  
And the far-away gates were unfolden  
To Baby Helène.

One moment, God's earth and its brightness  
Seemed darkened and turned into dross,  
And the manifold stars and their lightness,  
Were dimmed and as nothing to us.  
For the bowl that was golden was broken,  
The hearts that were one heart, were twain,  
And the last words of love had been spoken  
By Baby Helène.

Ah ! seven years gone as the dream goes,  
Oh ! baby love, lost to our ken,  
Will the brooklet still flow where the stream flows ?  
Will the lilies still blossom as then ?  
Will the sweet tongues of birds be unloosed to  
The songs of our love and its pain ?  
Will the violets bloom as they used to  
For Baby Helène ?

Oh ! baby love, heart-sweet, the sunlight  
That fell on the way that you went,  
Shall be to our feet as the one light,  
The lamp the sweet angels have lent.  
And the nights and the days shall be lighter,  
And the ways that were dark ways be plain,  
And the stars where thou art shall be brighter  
For Baby Helène.

## CHARLES AUSTEN'S LOVE.

A LONG stretch of dull, lurid sky ; the sun sinking from view behind a chain of grey hills in the distance ; a murky vapour hanging over the broad waste of heath, bounded on one side by the waters of a shallow river, overhung with drooping willows. The south-east wind blew up with a sickly chill from the far-away sea, sending a shiver through the nearly leafless branches of the woodbine still clinging to the casement, and through the frame and the heart of the young girl who stood there, looking out. It was all so dreary ; all, all. There was no break in her monotonous life from day to day ; she had begun to think there never would be any.

"Is it not late to have that window open, Lucy ?" spoke up a querulous voice from the depths of an arm-chair on the hearth-rug.

Miss Dennit closed the window, drew the curtains before it to keep out the draught, and turned to the fire. The red glow lit up her face ; but the warm light could not make the face otherwise than plain. At least, most people would have called it so, with its irregular features and its pale complexion. The one redemption it had, lay in its large, longing, soft brown eyes, and its mass of fine, dun-gold hair. And, to some people, there might be an attraction in its sweet and patient expression.

"Is that girl gone to her milking yet, Lucy ?" cried the same fretful voice again. "In my days milkmaids did not stand star-gazing when the cows were waiting for them."

"I will see, grandmamma. I think it is hardly time."

The old woman in the chair was not her grandmother, though Lucy always called her so ; she had been only the second wife of her mother's father, old Mr. Deste. Lucy put some more fuel on the fire, caught up a plaid shawl that lay on the back of a chair, and left the room. Her little grey-and-white kitten, that she had named Ino, followed her. She stooped to pat its silken head and then lifted the kitten in her arms. "You are all I have now to care for, or to care for me, Ino," she said, half sadly. When human sympathy fails, we do not despise that of our poor dumb favourites.

Matty was going off with her milk-pails. Miss Dennit walked through the garden to the side gate, put down the kitten, and stood there, her arms on the topmost wooden bar, feeling more depressed than customary. Nothing but melancholy, as it seemed to her, lay in her surroundings now.

Four years ago—Lucy shivered as she recalled it—her father, George Dennit, was missed one evening from his home at Dewbury : a handsome property of his own, standing some ten miles away from this. A few days' search—oh, such desolate, anxious

days of suspense and fear!—and he was found in the stream that skirted a portion of his land, and into which he must, it was universally assumed, have fallen accidentally. Mr. Dennit's means died with him. Dewbury went to a relative; it was entailed in the male line, and Lucy, being of the other sex, could not inherit it. Next, it was discovered that Mr. Dennit had embarked every shilling he possessed besides in a grand investment; and the investment fell to the ground soon after his death, and Lucy had nothing to fall back upon. She was homeless and penniless: and she thanked God sincerely that He had taken her dear mother before the shock came. Ah, what a happy home had been hers at Dewbury! full of brightness in the present, of hopeful prospect for the future! For a long while after quitting it, she dared not recal to memory the days that had been.

Old Mrs. Deste, her step-grandmother, offered her a home at Marsh Farm. Lucy accepted it gratefully; she had no other refuge; and though she knew it would be dreary, she schooled her mind to make the best of it. But it proved to be at times more hopelessly dreary than she well knew how to bear. Marsh Farm was small, only a handful of land, as may be said; but the old lady had continued to rent it and to cultivate it ever since her husband's death ten years ago, and she meant to do so to the end. She was active still, and went about the fold-yard and the barns and the homely garden in her pattens as briskly as Matty, looking after all things, her shrill tongue everywhere. Just now she had a touch of ague; it confined her indoors, and increased her ill-temper.

"Will it last for ever, this life?" thought poor Lucy, as she bent over the gate in the dreary October evening, her eyes, filled with tears, fixed on the western sky in front of her, where the setting sun was trying to shine for the first time that dreary day. "Will it last for ever, this life that is growing so intolerable? Without love or sympathy, without aim, without even the power of doing a little good?"

All in a moment, seeming almost to have sprung from the earth, a gentleman stood before her. A man of four-and-forty years, with a slender, upright form, a pleasing face, and threads of silver mixing with his dark hair. It was Charles Austen; called Squire Austen in the neighbourhood. He had a fine place about two miles away, and owned a good deal of the land hereabouts, Marsh Farm included.

"Oh!" exclaimed Lucy. "I did not see you coming up."

"I came round by the privet-hedge. What is your sorrow, Lucy?" added Squire Austen, as he took her hand, detecting the tears on her cheeks.

"Not much," she answered, in a light tone. "It has been a very dreary day, and I think such weather affects the spirits."

"Has your grandmother been even less amiable than usual?" he enquired. "Finding fault all round, and putting crooked so many things that would otherwise be straight?"

"Grandmamma is always cross now," answered Lucy. "But I think she suffers a good deal," she added, in extenuation. "And she is growing old, too. I always think that life to the old must be either one thing or the other: either very unlovely, dreary and sad, or very beautiful with the glow upon it of the unseen life that is approaching. This depends upon how the past life has moulded the character, and directed one's hopes and affections."

She spoke half dreamily, half to herself, and was probably carrying out the train of thought in which she was indulging before Charles Austen had come upon her so suddenly.

"I can imagine what *your* old age will be," he said, looking tenderly upon her. "To you will belong all its softness and beauty, and people will come to you in all their troubles for comfort and consolation."

"You think too well of me," returned Lucy, smiling. "Already I feel as if my youth were slipping away from me, and as yet there has been very little loveliness in my life. Before you came upon me so abruptly, I was wondering whether this sort of existence was to be mine for ever."

"And was this the cause of your tears?" he asked.

"I fear so," replied Lucy, blushing. "But after all perhaps I am ungrateful. If we do not take our lives into our own hands, they are chosen for us—and therefore what I am now going through must be best for me."

"You are an optimist," he laughed.

"I believe in the overruling and constant watchfulness of a Higher Power," she replied simply. "One who does all things well. Yes, I am sure that everything is for the best. Is that being an optimist?"

"It is the right way of looking at life, the wisest and most trusting," answered Charles Austen. "And it brings its reward."

He now drew open the small side gate and came in. Miss Dennit turned towards the house. He walked with her up the winding path.

"Were you coming in to see grandmamma?" she enquired.

"No; not particularly. Let us sit down for a few moments." And without waiting for any assent, he drew her to the bench beneath the great oak tree. There, once more taking her hand in his, he quietly asked her, his voice attuned to softness, to be his wife.

Lucy started away from him, flushing red to the very roots of her hair. Mr. Austen saw the swift rush of colour, dim though the light was there under the tree.

"You are asking me out of pity!" she cried, putting her hands to her face. "Surely you can have no love for so sad and spiritless a girl as my life has made me."

"Indeed, you wrong me," he answered; "as much as you wrong yourself by that description. I came here this evening with the firm intention of asking you to be my wife. Our conversation has made me, if possible, still more anxious for your reply."

"But what can I say?" returned Lucy with a voice full of tremor. "It has come upon me so suddenly. I never dreamed of this. Our positions are so different——"

"Only as regards worldly substance," he generously interrupted; "and that is as it should be. In all else, Lucy, you are worthy of a noble."

"Oh, no, no," she cried, moving yet farther away. "You do me too much honour. I cannot——"

"Do not decide hastily, Lucy," he said. "That movement almost tells that you were doing so—and to reject me. Weigh things well first. My dear, I have long seen how dreary your home is here; I would fain transplant you to one that will at least be more cheerful."

"You are very kind, Mr. Austen," she murmured.

"But do not think I am asking you from this sole motive—your own benefit," he returned, with a smile. "No. I want you for myself. I have learnt to love you, Lucy—more deeply than I once thought I could ever love again. You know my history?"

"Yes. Oh, yes. At least—some of it."

"In the past days, when I was nearly twenty years younger than I am now, I loved one who was—who was——"

Squire Austen broke off in emotion. It was as if the remnants of the old love lay about him yet.

"Why speak of it?" murmured Lucy. "I know more than enough, and how you must have suffered."

"Well, I loved her very greatly, that's enough to say; and I have kept single all these years for her sake. You have heard who it was, I daresay."

"Jean Deste, grandpapa's niece," whispered Lucy.

"And your mother's cousin. Yes. We plighted our troth to one another in love. True love; passionate love, Lucy; there was as much on her side as on mine. I retained at least that grain of consolation."

"And she gave you up," said Lucy in an earnest tone of sympathy. "Close upon the wedding-day."

"She gave me up close upon the wedding-day," assented Mr. Austen, his voice betraying resentment even yet, though he might know it not. "One came along here richer than I was, his prospects grander; I was not the eldest son then: Jean was dazzled by his attractions and she gave me up for him. There it lies, all the history: and many years have passed since then."

"If I once promised to marry a man, I would hold to my promise whatever might betide," spoke Lucy, clearly resolute.

Charles Austen laughed kindly. "And I want you," he said, "to promise to marry me. But not hastily, not against your better will or judgment; understand that fully, my dear. Weigh well the arguments that may present themselves to you, for and against. I am forty-four years of age this year; you are twenty-three——"

"Twenty-four," she interrupted, in her strict sense of justice. "I was twenty-four last month, September."

"You are twenty-four," he continued, as if without a break. "I am rich, and have a good home to offer you; you are poor and have no home, except this one accorded you by your grandmother, which is at its best dreary. And if you come to my home, I will make it a happy one to you, bright and cheerful ever with its circle of pleasant friends. And I will love and cherish you, my dear, as a good wife ought to be loved and cherished—and I shall trust that in time you will love me."

"I——"

"A moment yet, Lucy. Only that I may again ask you not to give me an answer hastily. Take a few days to consider; a week. This day week, say, at about this same time in the evening, I will come here again, and hear your decision."

He rose, pressed the hand, which he again held, folded the shawl about her shoulders, which she had let slip from them, said good night, and left her.

I wonder if any woman, be she young, or be she old, ever received her first offer of marriage unmoved? No, not if she have a heart in the right place. Lucy Dennit's was stirred to its very depths. Nothing so personally momentous as this had occurred to her in her whole life.

She stood up against the tree; her eyes looked straight into the gathering gloom, seeing nothing. Ino came purring round her, but received no notice now. Lucy was thinking. She was trying to decide already, though Mr. Austen had bade her not.

His own history had had a romance in it. The second son of old Squire Austen, well educated, well principled, and personally attractive, he had fallen in love with Jean Deste. She was beautiful; a graceful, elegant girl, well-trained, accomplished. But the Destes were not equal to the Austens in family or in position, and Charles Austen's fancy was not favoured in his home. The young lady, an orphan, had been destined for a governess; she, like Lucy Dennit in the present, had no home save the temporary one given her by her uncle at Marsh Farm, and no money. She was only eighteen, then, and she became as wildly in love with young Austen as he was with her. He brought his father round to give his consent to the marriage; and it was arranged that they should go into the Lowland Farm; Charles to be his father's tenant now; the farm to become his own at the Squire's death. Close upon this decision, September came in. On the first day of the month, when out shooting, Charles Austen got rather seriously hurt, and was conveyed to the county town, to lie up there and be near the doctors.

There came a dashing man to Marsh Farm for the autumn shooting: one Captain Trevor. He was a distant connection of Mr. Deste's, and he wrote to ask for accommodation (on the footing of a visitor) for himself and his servant, offering a substantial recompense.

He came. It might be said he came, and saw, and conquered. A man of the world, he, of courtly manners. Jean Deste was dazzled. He admired her childish beauty, he paid her great attention; he walked with her, and sat with her, and sang with her, and he won her fancy if not her heart. Some words that he spoke, one day, in his heedlessness, she construed into an offer of marriage. She thought he had made it; he (afterwards) totally denied it, laughed at the very idea of it. That was the notion she took up, however. He was a rich man with a fine estate: as his wife she should be (as she whispered to herself) a grand lady of the world; while as Mrs. Charles Austen she should be but a farm-house mistress. Not for a day did Jean hesitate.

She wrote to Charles Austen a pretty little letter, full of penitence for what she was doing, and gave him up. Irrevocably. There was no beating about the question, no hesitation. She had learnt to care for Captain Trevor, she said, and was about to marry him: and she knew that she should never have got along in a farm; she was not calculated for one; she felt that the sphere into which a union with Captain Trevor would raise her was her proper and fitting sphere; the secret ambition of her heart had ever been to marry a man who could give her position and wealth.

This letter reached Charles Austen the day after his return home. He had been away two months; and, though cured, was weak yet. Wounded as with a barbed arrow, he proceeded to Marsh Farm, and had a stormy interview with Jean. It did no good: she held to her decision. He demanded to see Captain Trevor, calling him sundry contemptuous names; but Captain Trevor had left the farm that morning to stay a few days with some acquaintances he had made, ignorant of the tempestuous weather he left behind him. Jean seeking to be just, in spite of her unworthy conduct, explained to Charles Austen that Captain Trevor did not merit blame: it had never been disclosed to him that she was an engaged girl; for aught he knew to the contrary, she had been free as air. Telling her that she was utterly unworthy an honest man's love, and that he would never willingly look upon her again in life, Charles Austen went out from Marsh Farm and from Jean, shaking the dust off his shoes. The clouds looked bleak and bitter in the November sky: they were not as bitter as the young man's heart.

That was the ending, so far as he was concerned. For Jean it was even less satisfactory. After a week's absence, Captain Trevor returned to the farm; but only to make preparations for his final departure. What was his hurry, Mr. Deste asked him. Nay, but he thought he was not in any hurry, the Captain answered, smiling pleasantly; the two months that he had originally proposed to stay, were already expired. "And what of Jean?" cried the farmer, who was a plain, honest, simple-natured man. "What of Jean?" repeated the Captain, "nothing, that I know of. *What* of her?" "Is she not going to be

your wife? Did you not ask her to be?" Captain Trevor stared. "Why no, certainly not," said he readily; "I never thought of such a thing." The farmer stared in turn. "Well, I don't know," he said in perplexity, "she picked up the notion somehow, and told her aunt of it." "She must have been joking," returned Captain Trevor. "I have jested and laughed with Jean, kissed her also now and then as a cousin—or indeed I may say as a child, for she's not much more; but I assure you there has been nothing else." "Well, well, Trevor, I dare say you are right; young girls are silly creatures," concluded Mr. Deste; "and I hope you'll come again next year."

So that was all. Captain Trevor said nothing to Jean before he went, though she expected it all day long, every minute of every hour. He openly called her "My dear," as one calls a child, and gave her a farewell kiss before them all. When he was gone, Mr. Deste took his niece to task, telling her in the presence of his wife that young maids in their teens should not be forward to pick up silly notions; he repeated, word for word, the conversation with Captain Trevor, and perhaps, unconsciously, a little exaggerated the Captain's cool indifference.

"Thee hast done a pretty thing, girl, in flinging up young Austen," commented Mrs. Deste, in the homely language she kept for scolding. "Thee has flung away the substance, trying to grasp the shadow, Jean. And, I would like to ask, what's left to thee now?"

Nothing was left to her, except humiliation, burning shame, a lasting sense of disgrace. Before a week was over Jean Deste had quitted her uncle's roof for that of the distant school where she was educated. She remained in it as teacher for two years; then she became governess in a family, and went abroad with them. She had been a governess all this dreary time since, and was Jean Deste still. Mr. Austen took no more notice of her than if she had been dead: he had never sought her or enquired after her from that day to this.

And now, look at the caprices of fate and fortune! Barely had these troubles been enacted, when Squire Austen's eldest son died, and Charles became the heir. What did Miss Deste think of her doings then?

Leaning against the oak tree this October evening, Lucy Dennit recalled all this that had passed so many years ago—for it was known to her—and asked herself whether or not she should take this good man, who had had his sorrow and outlived it.

She recalled her own painful past, she dwelt on the dreary present, she strove to look at the future. Grim and gaunt it all seemed to her. She was beyond her first girlhood, and care had made her old before her time. A young village flirt had said to her the other day, "Oh, but you know you are quite an old maid already, Miss Dennit." She saw nothing before her but lonely, unloved existence; no near friend to smooth her path to the grave, to touch her hair with a caressing hand, or to press a kiss on her lips.

It was the living without love and loving companionship that she dreaded. Years back, in her shy, girlish heart, she had dreamed of the time when she should have a lover. That time had now come; she had received her first offer—her first and her last—but Mr. Austen was not the kind of lover she had pictured. Lucy glanced back at the plain, gloomy, old farm-house behind her, and then thought of Austen Hall, with its beautiful site, its sunny chambers, and the grand manorial trees surrounding it.

Lastly she thought of the Hall's generous master. Never anything but a good word was given to him far and wide. A kind man he, just, benevolent, intellectual, and still good-looking. She remembered whose hand it was that had put the choicest flowers on her poor father's coffin at the funeral; and who had gently drawn her away from the new-made grave, whispering comfort and hope. A good man in every sense of the term, living to do his duty to God as well as to man. Almost that night she decided. Almost.

And when Squire Austen came a week later to hear her answer, she gave it him without preamble.

"I will marry you," she said, quietly, "but do not ask me yet for love. I, who know so little of it, must wait to learn."

"Heaven help you in the lesson!" he said, fervently, as he kissed her. So they were betrothed.

The marriage was fixed for the following spring—May. Mr. Austen would have wished it earlier, but she whispered that she wanted to learn to love him. Yet, as the months went on, Lucy's courage almost failed her, with the consciousness that the love did not come. Her heart never thrilled at his approach, her pulses beat not a shade quicker when his hand touched hers.

## II.

EARLY in March visitors came to the Hall from town. Mrs. Law and her son Edmund. She was Charles Austen's sister, a quiet, kindly woman. Edmund was a good-looking young fellow of twenty-seven, by profession a medical man, and had taken his degree of M.D. Close work at one of the hospitals, in which he held a post, following upon a slight attack of fever caught in pursuance of his duties, had necessitated change of air. "Come to me for a month at least," wrote Mr. Austen to him, "and get your mother to accompany you." No sooner were they come than Mr. Austen invited Lucy to stay at the Hall; it was a good opportunity for the visit that he had been wishing she could pay.

The two younger people were constantly in each other's society. The Squire, unsuspecting as the day, never dreamed of any undesirable result. They strolled side by side in the sweet spring sunshine; they fell into confidential talk; they compared sorrows in their past lives—and never a disloyal thought occurred to either of them,

never a fear of it until it was too late. Since October, Lucy had been whispering to herself that she must be too old and grave to love: she now found out her mistake. At Dr. Law's step her face would crimson, the touch of his fingers on hers thrilled her for hours afterwards with a subtle sense of delight. She awoke to its meaning with a sort of helpless horror. She could not help herself; she dared not speak and avoid him, for her lightest word would reveal that she had given her heart unsought.

So the farce went on. The Squire, greatly engaged with certain business at this time, and also in driving out his sister, from whom he had long been separated, was genial and happy. Lucy grew pale and wretched, Dr. Law was never at ease. They mutually avoided one another as much as was possible without giving rise to observation.

One day early in April, when Mr. Austen had gone to his place on the magistrates' bench, and Mrs. Law kept her room with a cold, Lucy, intensely wretched, wandered out, she cared not whither, and found herself near the mines, which lay two miles away on the Austen property. There, to her dismay, she encountered Dr. Law: she had thought him with his uncle. He had just emerged from the shaft. Equally confused at seeing her, he began to talk of the darkness below.

"I never have seen it," she said, looking down the shaft. "I should so like to go."

"Nothing more easy, ma'am," spoke up the foreman of the pit, who knew Miss Dennit. "We let some ladies down only last week. You've just got to step into the basket, and you can be down and back again in a minute or two."

Taking him at his word, Lucy stepped in. Dr. Law followed her quickly. She had not intended this—but what objection could she make? The cord was rapidly unwound; they descended swiftly. Touching the bottom and looking up, Lucy saw only the minute circular hole filled with daylight.

Dr. Law spoke. "Will you get out and explore farther?"

"No, no!" she said, with a shiver. "Let us go back instantly. I feel frightened—half suffocated. I cannot think what impulse induced me to come down to this terrible place."

He saw that she was really nervous, and put up his hand to give the signal for return to those above, but it fell back powerless by his side. A pale blue flash of light illumined the blackness—there was a noise as if the solid universe were rent—a fearful sense of suffocation filled the air, and then afar off was heard the rush and gurgle of water.

"Good heavens!" murmured Edmund Law. "It must be fire-damp!"

Lucy clung to him; he clasped her blindly. In that moment of peril, their last moment it might be in this world, they forgot the very

existence of Mr. Austen ; forgot everything but that they loved one another better than life.

Dr. Law was tolerably well acquainted with the mine ; he realised the situation at a glance. To hope for aid from above was futile. The whole shaft had been choked up ; the only avenue to safety cut off. All he could do was to labour for the few moments left him of life. He lifted Lucy some feet above to a shelf of rock and climbed up beside her. She clung to him like a child ; he held her to him as if she had been one.

"I am not afraid with you, Edmund," she presently whispered. "I feel quite happy."

"Lucy, I must speak now. Oh, I have loved you from the very first, but I have tried to be honourable for his sake. He is so noble, and so generous ! But now, in this last hour, it can be no sin to speak. My darling, may I kiss your lips ?"

"On the other side," she answered simply. "In this world my lips belong to him only. It cannot be long to wait."

He acquiesced in silence. They sat on quietly side by side, his arm round her waist to hold her up safely, her hand in his.

It seemed ages to them, but it was only a few minutes, ere the terrible stillness that had come upon the place was broken by a dull thud. The very darkness quivered and danced before them ; a second and a third stroke, and a mass of earth fell down from above, almost stunning, almost blinding them ; and then a breath of heaven's own air swept in—a ray of sunshine dropped its gold into the gloom.

The miners had broken in the top of the mine, and they were saved. A rope was let down—Dr. Law fastened it around the waist of Lucy—she was drawn up, and he speedily followed. But when he bent to lift her up, she sank a dead weight in his arms, without life or motion.

A week or two of long and anxious watching elapsed before Lucy Dennit rallied, and they knew that she would live. All through the sweet April sunshine she lay in the great guest-chamber of the Hall, to which she had been carried—lay quietly unconscious. But she spoke at times incoherent words in her mind's wandering, which astonished Squire Austen and Mrs. Law.

"The mine, Edmund ! the mine !" she murmured in her first return to consciousness. "Edmund, where's Edmund ?"

"You are safe with me, my dear," said the Squire ; "and Edmund is safe too. He was hurt a little, and has stayed on here to get well and strong again. You shall see him soon."

Lucy took the kind hand that was smoothing her brow, kissed it, and burst into tears. "You are so good to me !" she whispered.

"I try to be," he answered.

A day or two later, when she was better, and lying on the sofa by

the window, the magnificent prospect outside gladdening her eyes, Dr. Law came in. He had not attended her professionally ; for the first few days he had to be attended to himself ; later, he declined to interfere. He knew that the less he saw of Lucy Dennit the better for his peace.

"Oh, Edmund, do not come here !" she cried out in alarm.

"My dear ——"

"Edmund, do not ! You must not. You are an honourable man, Edmund. Oh, Edmund, you know, you know ! Why do you come here ?"

"But, Lucy, hear me," he began passionately. But she would not.

"Hush ! do not tempt me. Heaven knows I want to do my duty. But I am weak, and you must help me with your strength : men can always be stronger than women. Edmund, you must go away from the Hall ; you should not have stayed. Go at once. I cannot keep up this wretched deceit before him, so generously unsuspecting. Go back to your home, Edmund ; we must not meet again. With Heaven's help I will be true to him to whom my plighted word is given."

In answer to this urgent and agitated appeal, Dr. Edmund Law simply bent his head and kissed her.

"Oh, Edmund ! for shame !" she cried, with flushing face. "Have you quite lost honour ?"

Edmund laughed at the appeal and imprisoned her hand in his. "As to going away," he said blithely, "you must hear me first. I have something to say."

"You would not say it before your uncle," she returned quite indignantly, striving to be loyal and true.

"Why, my dear uncle sent me in to say it," answered Edmund.

He told it then, and she listened. Great news. *Glorious*, she might have thought it but for being ungrateful. Charles Austen, having become acquainted with the state of affairs, had resigned her to Dr. Law.

He came in himself to confirm it. His face pale, but his fine eyes sparkling with the light of a generous purpose. Lucy caught his hand within her own as she listened, tears trickling down her face.

"Many things that I did not understand are now clear to me," he said in conclusion. "I was too long blind : and, my dears, your young lives shall not be wrecked by the selfishness of an old fellow like me. I have lived without love hitherto ; it will not be much harder so to live on to the end. Nay, don't thank me. There ; I'll leave you to talk it over with one another."

He went out of the room and left them together. Went out into the bright sunshine, and thought it had never seemed so golden as then. He was a little sad, but on his heart there fell a great wave of peace.

He went down the flower-bordered path to the honeysuckle arbour that stood near the garden entrance. The tall, graceful form of a lady in half-mourning was coming in at the gate, and it caused him to turn to her. She threw back her veil, revealing a face pale and sad, yet singularly sweet; a young face still, for all its eight-and-thirty years. A shiver like an aspen leaf passed over Charles Austen, thrilling him with—was it joy?—or was it resentment?

"I beg your pardon," she began, in the old sweet voice he remembered so well. "Do—do you know me?"

"I think I do. Miss Deste, I believe."

"Will you pardon me this intrusion? I have felt very anxious about Lucy Dennit: and my aunt thought if I ventured to call here, I might be allowed to see her. Her mother was my cousin, and a dear friend of mine in my girlhood."

"You can see her, of course. Are you staying at Marsh Farm?"

"I came there yesterday to see my aunt. It is many years since I saw her; I have lived abroad."

They walked towards the house, talking of indifferent things in a politely distant tone. "I will send up to ask if Lucy can receive you at once," said Mr. Austen. "We must not intrude upon her too abruptly, for her intended husband is holding his first interview with her since her illness," he added, with a half smile.

"Her intended husband!" repeated Miss Deste. "I thought—I heard—I fancied—that ——"

"That it was I who was to marry her," quietly put in the Squire.

"No, Jean, it is my nephew, Dr. Law."

The name, Jean, slipped out without thought. Her face turned crimson, and then paled to a marble whiteness.

Miss Deste stayed all day. She and Mrs. Law had not met for twenty years. Charles Austen walked home with her in the summer's evening. All his love for her had come back again; the enduring, ardent love that had never died out.

"Do you intend to make much stay at Marsh Farm?" he asked, breaking a long silence.

"About a week, I think."

"And then?"

"Then? Oh, then I go into the world again," she said, smiling.

"The engagement I have had so long has terminated, and I must seek another."

"You are not rich enough, then, to retire?"

Jean looked round at him with another smile. Ah, what a sweet face it still was!—how it sent all his pulses tingling! "Did you ever hear of a governess getting rich, Mr. Austen? I don't think I ever did."

Turning in at the side gate of Marsh Farm, it was the nearest gate, they went up the path. The sun was setting, and the sky around was very beautiful, and they sat down side by side under

the shade of the spreading oak tree to watch it. Its dying beams lighted up their faces with a rosy hue.

"Am I to forgive and forget?" he suddenly whispered.

"I should like your forgiveness, Charles; though you may not forget," she said, after a pause of emotion, as she turned to him her agitated face. "Just your forgiveness! I have pined for it, ay, and prayed for it, all these wearing years."

"My Jeanie as of old?" he asked, gathering her to his constant heart. "Nay, better than of old. Shall it be?"

"If you will take her, Charles," she answered softly, bursting into happy tears.

So there were two weddings that summertime instead of one, both the brides being taken from Marsh Farm, from the tender custody of the ancient and genial Mrs. Deste. The one to enter on the busy life that belongs to the wife of a popular medical man; the other to reign as Lady Paramount over Austen Hall and its master's unchanging heart.

C. A.



#### IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ANNE.

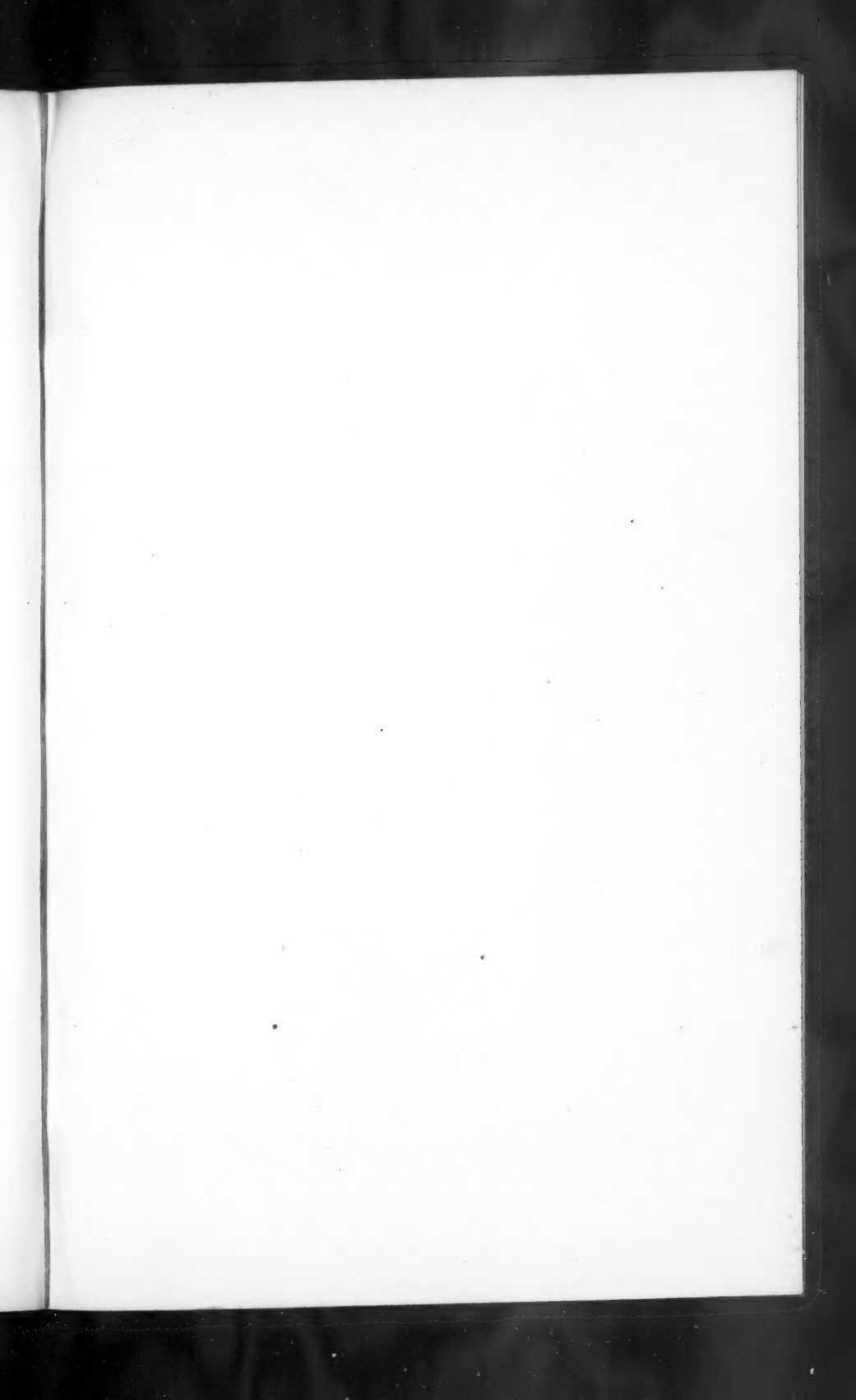
QUEEN ANNE she owns a mansion red,  
And wears a flowered sacque.  
(My Lady Betty will not wed,  
And all the beaux look black.)

Queen Anne likes furniture askew,  
And spindle-legg'd beside.  
(Sir Harry vows he'll never woo;  
The belles are mortified.)

Queen Anne tip-taps in high-heel'd shoes,  
With patches on her cheek.  
("And so Sir Harry never woos?"  
"'Pon honour, 'tis my freak!")

Queen Anne reposes in a bed,  
Funereal, stately, grim.  
My Lady Betty will not wed?"  
"'Pon honour, 'tis my whim!")

Queen Anne applauds a quaint-cut yew,  
Her rooms are wainscoted.  
("If, Lady Betty, I *should* woo —?" —  
"Sir Harry, I—*might* wed!")





M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.

SHE SEEMED TO HAVE FORGOTTEN HIM.